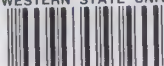


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# ARGUS

'83

VOLUME 7

NUMBER 1



## ON MAKING A COVER:

### The Artist's Viewpoint

Io, ingenue inescapable of  
Argus, Argus-eyed of Io's beauty, while  
Hermes, heralding heavenly hoaxes  
Slays the slumbering centiclops, giving  
Peace personified in a peacock plume.

Peace is a reflection of creativity in action.  
Creativity is the mind's eye made visible.  
The human spirit again takes wing and  
Delivers truth to all the conscious participants,  
But the unconscious ones just continue to  
Myth out on everything.

*Ron Williams*

---

**ARGUS —the mind's eye**


---

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**NEXUS**

Hundred-eyed Argus has been taken from Greek mythology to represent the many different viewpoints of artists and audiences. The peacock feather is one symbol of this diversity, and the Argus staff has added another stratum to the ancient meaning this year with our slogan "Argus—the mind's eye."

We feel that this is our task—to give utterance to the vision, the longing, and the view from the minds of our students, faculty, and alumni. We present these images in the form of poetry, prose, photography, art and drama; but we hope you, the reader, make connections beyond the form—to the imaginative field within the artist's mind.

In an effort to expand the arena of artistic discourse, the Argus staff sponsored "Poetry in the Loft," a poetry reading, photography show, and awards ceremony in conjunction with the Theatre-Speech Department last fall. We were very pleased with the favorable response to this event and plan to continue our forays into making Art more accessible to the Northwestern community.

We offer you this edition with some pride—the staff has worked hard to continue the traditions of Argus. We want you to share our sense of accomplishment in this expression of Northwestern's finest creation: the human spirit.

Susan Long Haga  
Editor-in-Chief

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Argus is a literary/arts magazine  
published by the students of  
Northwestern State University,  
Natchitoches, Louisiana.

Price \$2.50

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**NORTHWESTERN STATE  
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Our special thanks to: Mr. Nolan Bailey, Dr. James R. Bartholomew,  
Dr. E. Robert Black, Dr. Sara A. Burroughs, The Loft Theatre  
Readers, and the students of Northwestern State University



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## Argus Awards

This past year, Argus held a Literary and Arts Contest. From over two hundred and fifty entries, the following winners were selected. We congratulate and commend these students.

### FALL 1982

Poetry	First Place .....	Myrna Schexnider "Fall Comes Without You"
	Second Place .....	Shari Miller "The Encounter"
	Third Place .....	Carol Wells "Oh God, Change the Channel!"
	Fourth Place .....	Susan Dollar "Seeing Clearly"
	Honorable Mention .....	Amanda Young "Field of Cotton"
Short Story	First Place .....	Corliss McCallister "The Elusive 'O'"
	Second Place .....	R. Mark Rachal "Vicious Circle"
	Third Place .....	Eric Maron "The Bank Teller"
	Honorable Mention .....	Scott Cox "Will"
One-act Play	First Place .....	Carol Wells "Reach Out"
Essay	First Place .....	Linda Verrett "On Fathers and Daughters"
	Second Place .....	Janice Denison "Oscillation"
	Third Place .....	Suzette Victorian "Pinecrest"
Photography and Art	First Place .....	Renée Hughes Untitled Photograph
	Second Place .....	André Davis Untitled Photograph
	Third Place .....	Peyton Cunningham Untitled Photograph
	Honorable Mention .....	Renée Hughes Untitled Photograph
	Honorable Mention .....	Angela Rome "Keys" a Drawing
	Honorable Mention .....	Laurie Wisdom Untitled Photograph
Cover	First Place .....	Ron Williams Untitled Drawing

### SPRING 1983

Poetry	First Place .....	Shari Miller "Bones"
Short Story	First Place .....	R. Mark Rachal "Power Play"
One-act Play	First Place .....	Daphne DeVerger "The Other Side of the Blackboard"

Students from the Creative Writing Program at Northwestern often receive awards in state and regional literary competitions after the Argus has gone to press. We are proud to honor these writers.

Buffy DeVeau "NYC Hasid"

First Honorable Mention, Poetry, Deep South Writers' Competition, Argus Vol. VI, No. 1.

Susan Long Haga "Americana" "The Harvest" ("The Stripping Room")

First Honorable Mention, Honorable Mention, Deep South Writers' Competition, Argus Vol. VI, No. 1.

Kathleen Smith "Safe"

First Place, One-act Play, Southern Literary Festival, Argus Vol. VI, No. 1.

Linda Verrett "Summer Odyssey"

Third Place, Personal Essay, Southern Literary Festival, Argus Vol. VI, No. 1.

Shari Miller

Won the 1983 National Career Award for Poetry given by the Shreveport Chapter of the National Society of Arts and Letters.

### Through the Windows of Caldwell

The shadows on the white columns  
move slowly across the remnants  
of our past, as the wind blows  
the pecan trees' branches...  
sentinels of Orientation 101.

*Ellen Dollar*



*Caldwell Stairs, pen and ink by Angela Rome*

---

**SPRING CONTEST FIRST PLACE POETRY**

---

**Bones**

Wood stove burning  
and the old farmer cutting  
a flute out of cane.  
We sit listening to the rain  
and drinking his strong coffee  
while the warmth moves down our throats,  
through our hands,  
keeps traveling outward  
till connecting the room like a ballad  
we become his fingers,  
nimble though calloused,  
deftly wielding the knife,  
rusty steel against bone,  
our bone.

The rain falls, the stove burns,  
the man makes music out of cane.

*Shari Miller*



### Life's Little Contradictions

Pity us, the victims  
 Of life's little contradictions.  
 Forever unsure of  
 What is real, and  
 What is not.  
 Do we exist, or  
 Do we not?  
 Are we Plato's reflections, or  
 Aristotle's reality? And why  
 Does the disciple  
 Differ from the master?  
 How can an approximation  
 Achieve an exact answer?  
 We all remember  $\pi r^2$ , don't we?  
 No one knows except God,  
 Who may or  
 May not exist,  
 But in whose name we  
 Vow to love each other  
 Till death do us part.  
 Tell me, can corpses  
 Commit adultery, or  
 Have we merely become  
 The victims  
 Of life's little contradictions?  
 Maybe, maybe not.

*Paul Pickering*

### Dawn

Living her moments as if each were new  
 she grew  
 wise to sun-dry rancid pools past  
 at last  
 psyche conquered fret of tamper-proof future.

Salute her.

*Lee Anne Moore*

### Tribute to the Snow Goose

Fragile pilgrim  
 Arc the sky testing currents of the wind.  
 It is your time to go.  
 The autumn days are heavy here  
 New lands await you  
 Which your wings were meant for seeing  
 Lands beyond the jagged edges  
 Where your heart renewed itself  
 And me.

Try the cloudless sky  
 The ether is thinner than the dust of earth.  
 This is your passage as with all so fair.  
 Yet when the winds of Spring  
 Bring scents of life returning  
 My ears shall keep watch  
 Keened for the whisper of your homing wings.

*Carleen Boudreaux*

# SPRING CONTEST THIRD PLACE SHORT STORY

## Bank Teller

I've heard that it is always, best to start at the beginning, and with what has happened today, I think that it's best to begin at the start.

As a struggling screen writer, it is not very often that I have the opportunity to deposit money into my barely solvent bank account. Today was an exception; my income tax refund check had arrived in the mail. This in itself would have made my day. Anyway, I arrived at my bank, the First National Overland, or as I like to think of it, the First National Overdraft, at about one-thirty.

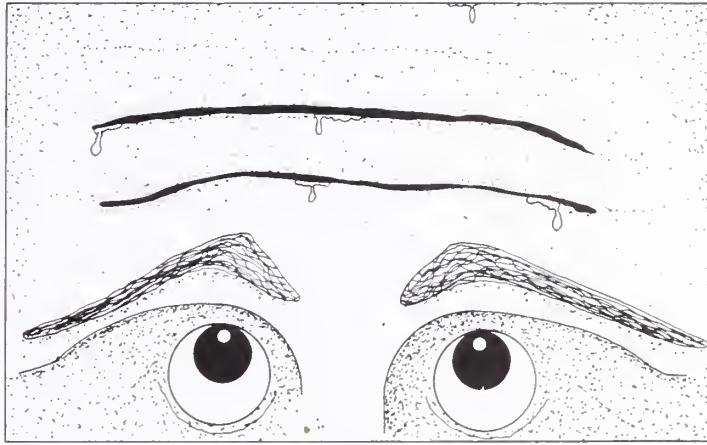
There were six people either standing in line or filling out some sort of banking paperwork. I immediately went to my favorite teller, Lisa Stolzenburg. Let me tell you a little about Lisa. She is so pretty she makes my teeth sweat. Her black wavy hair falls to her shoulders, teasing me. Her blue eyes sparkle, and as for her body, everything seems to have been custom-made; it all fits together perfectly. She is about five and a half feet tall and looks twenty-five years old. This is good, for at twenty-eight, I am not too old for her.

Well, enough about this fantasy. I have learned all that fantasies do is raise my blood pressure and start my heart beating faster, and I can get the same response jogging.

As it turned out, I happened to be the third person in Lisa's line, right behind a little old lady about seventy years of age with curly gray hair and a dark green overcoat. She carried the usual black purse and wore half-heel shoes. I'm sure you know the type; they're all over town. I hear that they're manufactured by some company in New Jersey.

Right in front of her, at the window with Lisa, was your typical construction worker with the muddy shoes, faded jeans, flannel shirt, down vest, and oily baseball cap. I hear they manufacture these people in Minnesota. The only other window open had two people in line: a concerned businessman making a deposit and a tall black man waiting patiently behind him. Across the room, a pretty housewife in her early thirties was inquiring about a loan with a woman at the loan desk.

None of us noticed a small frail man who entered the bank carrying a shoe box and



Untitled pen and ink by Allen M. Ford

holding a little mutt on a leash by his side. This little man, somewhere in his fifties, slowly shuffled his way over to the bank president's desk. The bank president, a distinguished-looking man in his forties, was wearing the usual three-piece suit and sporting a healthy head of salt-and-pepper hair. He looked very clean. I got the feeling he worried a lot; his ashtray was filled with finished cigarettes.

The little man walked to the desk and without saying a word, placed the shoe box down, opened it, and withdrew a white pigeon. It was a common pigeon, like you see in the park every day. The bank president looked up at him and calmly asked, "May I help you?"

"Yes, just a moment, please," the little man replied, walking around behind the president. "Now, hold still please," he said and placed the pigeon on the president's head. By now the little man's actions had caught not only the president's interest, but that of mine and the black man in the next line as well.

The little man looked up at us and shouted out, "Okay! Nobody moves or the pigeon shits!" We all looked at him. I thought he might be a little ill, and I felt a little sorry for him. The woman behind the loan desk apparently recognized him because she let out a scream and shouted, "Oh my God, it's the Stool Pigeon!"

"Cute joke," I thought and turned my attention back to Lisa and calmly waited my turn. I started to drift into another fantasy—something about Lisa and a quiet mountain chalet when the little man interrupted.

"Now listen up and nobody will get hurt."

The bank president didn't move and in fact, just sat there, eyes looking up with perspiration forming on his brow. He looked worried.

The woman behind the loan desk exclaimed, "For God's sake, somebody help him!"

With that, the bank president looked even more worried and slowly raised his hands and said, "No, for my sake, do as he says...please."

The black man and I exchanged a glance, and I said, "Candid Camera." He just shrugged.

"Now, I promise nobody will get hurt,"

By Eric B. Maron

the little man continued. "Just follow my directions. You tellers, place all the money on top of the counters, and I mean all the money." He reached into his coat and pulled out a large paper bag and walked toward the teller windows.

Behind the windows the tellers were busy piling the money on the counter. One of the bank employees grabbed a typing cart and ran into the vault and worked quickly to fill it with money.

I slowly took a few steps back, leaned on the counter, and started to smile. It was great; I had never seen anything like this before. I kept waiting for someone to yell, "April Fool," at which time we would all laugh and be good friends. The little man saw me smile and quickly scurried up to me and demanded, "What's so damn funny?"

"Nothing; this is great. I'm not laughing at you; I'm laughing with you. This is the greatest practical joke I have ever seen."

"Oh, so it's a joke you think we're playing here, huh? Well, we'll see who's laughing!" With that, he shouted out, "Scooter! Set!" The little dog by his side jumped to life and started to growl.

"Oh, so you're going to turn the dog loose on me, huh," I said. "Come on, the dog isn't even a foot tall."

The little man grinned slightly. "Scooter, get him!" The dog jumped and came running at me, barking and growling. He ran straight for my leg, but instead of sinking his teeth into my flesh, he quickly stopped, raised his hind leg and just stared at me.

"Now, one more peep from you, and he'll let you have it," the little man said, quite satisfied with his surprise weapon.

He did have me; they were new white pants. My black friend began to giggle.

The little old lady in front of me was staring at the poor bank president, who looked worried with the pigeon still perched on his head. She started to cry.

"Lady," I said, "Don't worry, it's okay. It's just a bird."

"Yes," she sniffled, "but he has such nice hair," and she continued to sob.

Our little bank robber finally gathered up the money. He turned toward us and slowly smiled.

"You've all been very good...well," looking at me, "almost all of you." My black friend chuckled again.

The little man then started toward the door. Just before leaving, he called out, "Scooter! Here!" The dog growled up at me and slowly, his hind leg still cocked and on only three legs, hobbled back to his master. "Now listen up. We're leaving, and I don't want anybody to move for five minutes. Is that understood?" The tellers all nodded, the bank president perspired, the black man giggled, the dog growled, and I sighed.

"Good," the man said. He let out a whistle, and the pigeon leaped from the bank president's head and flew to his master's call. In a second, they were all gone.

I looked at the black man, who was all smiles. He was having a great time.

"So what do you think; should we call the police or the animal shelter?" I asked.

"I think we should go out for a beer," he replied.

And I do believe, officers, that as soon as I sign this police report, that's just what we're going to do.



*Destiny, a black and white photograph by André Davis*





## Home

*Untitled black and white photograph by Renee Richard*

A few more miles to go, it won't be long...  
Another cigarette, a few more sign posts...

How far have you traveled?  
It must be the millionth song...

The daydreams don't come so easy now...  
Different trees, different houses, but the road looks as it did  
a hundred miles ago.

Soon now, he'll run to meet you and she'll stand in the door to  
ask how it went...

A simple o.k. — but you know different...

Did you really have to go?  
You're finally home after all the miles...

You're glad and...  
I think maybe God smiles.

*Janice Denison*

## for FGB

Unsuccessful dreams die young  
unwanted, unknowing  
uncertain, unsure  
Visions cannot live by bread alone  
Reality dons the Reaper's mask  
Dead Dreams  
become immortalized  
in the city's rainbows  
...hidden behind the  
smog banks and acid rain

*Leslie Gregory*



*Canders, black and white photograph by Allen M. Ford*

### **Til Death Us Do Part**

Where have all the couples gone,  
we frolicked with from dusk till dawn?  
A mistress here, a bankbook there  
and booze was bubbling everywhere!

Where have all the couples fled?  
Let's keep score, check every bed.  
A farmer here, a lawyer there  
discontent dripping everywhere!

Where have all the couples strayed,  
from silly games we laughed and played?  
A groping here, a French kiss there  
and fantasy flowing everywhere!

Where have all the couples bled,  
after all those years of being wed?  
On parents here and children there;  
unhappiness happening everywhere!

*Myrna Schexnider*

**In the Shadows**

In the shadows behind my eyes  
I see myself here in another time  
The scenes so vivid in my mind  
It's the Old South I recognize.

I smell sweet bay and cape jasmine in the air  
And honeysuckle vines cover the summer house on the hill  
I hear crickets and katy-dids and even a whippoorwill  
I search everywhere but my lover is not there.

He rode off to fight the blues, wearing the gray  
It's been three long years he's been gone  
And I dread spending another winter alone  
Yet I can see his face as clear as yesterday.

Times have been so hard, so much has changed  
Everyone's gone; the fields are grown up in weeds  
We've lost our will to survive it seems  
When he returns, will nothing be the same?

But will he return to me? Oh, he must--  
I stand on the veranda in the moonlight  
Lost in dreams of a long ago night  
Waiting for him to return to me at last.

*Jo D. Honeycutt*



*Still Life, black and white photograph by Renee Hughes*



# FALL CONTEST FIRST PLACE SHORT STORY

## The Elusive "O"



Pen and ink by Allen M. Ford

She reluctantly switched on the keyboard and decided to warm up with a creativity exercise instead of just starting to write at once. She punched in her program and the first message appeared on the screen.

CREATIVITY EXERCISE #234. EXTRAPOLATE SOCIETAL CHANGES WHEN \_\_\_\_\_ ARE ABSENT IN SOCIETY.

She punched in "CREATIVE TALENTS" absentmindedly and waited for the computer to process.

CHOOSE ONE CHARACTER FROM COLUMN A AND ONE FROM COLUMN B.

She did, as she always did, and waited for the scenario to emerge. It wasn't very satisfying, she thought, this screen. There's no place to doodle. She wasn't quite used to the automatic nature of it all.

THE SCENARIO IS PLANET \_\_\_\_\_ IN THE YEAR \_\_\_\_\_. THE MAIN CHARACTERS ARE MARRIED AND EACH IS A CREATIVE ARTIST. THE POSSIBLE PLOT SEQUENCES ARE LISTED BELOW:

She punched the automatic input for a planet's name and closed her eyes to blindly choose the date. Then she examined the sequences:

- 1) THEY MOVE TO A PLANET WITHOUT CREATIVITY.
- 2) THEY ARE THE ONLY TWO LEFT ON A PLANET WITHOUT OTHER CREATIVITY.
- 3) THEY AND ALL OTHERS ON THE PLANET LOSE THEIR CREATIVITY SUDDENLY.
- 4) THEIR CHILDREN, BECAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES, ARE NOT CREATIVE.
- 5) THEY INVENT A CURE FOR...

She stopped the machine there and rubbed her chin. Maybe the exercise wasn't so good after all. She cleared the screen and watched the serene blue stare back at her. She rubbed her chin again and decided to move away from the screen for a while. In a sheltered corner she went through her ritual of delay.

"All the good themes like soil compaction have already been used. I don't see how they can possibly expect an 'O' from me. There hasn't been one in years."

She examined the texture on the wall and the color of the ceiling. There wasn't much to focus on. There wasn't anything to distract her.

By Corliss McCallister

A flash of immortality appeared. If she could just make the comp deadline for lit transmission she would go to all the galaxy libraries. She inwardly oohed at the possibilities. Then the immensity of the possible honor and fame reminded her of the enormity of the task. "I, imagination, pale before the universe." She quoted herself to herself.

The dull hum of the robot librarians and the buzz of their lights brought on sleepiness. She tried to wake herself up by reading her notes on another story. But her reading gave way to doodling which then escaped from the margin into her story notes.

She went back to the screen and punched in the the holo-form and watched her story develop on the visual mode. It was very satisfying to see her characters until the scene ended abruptly. The conflict remained unsolved. She leaned her head into her hands. She really wanted to write.

"Okay, I'll check what's wrong." She went through her list mentally. "Mm, no.3—pressure created by nervous habits." "How bizarre," she thought, "that you expend energy with or without the creative output."

Her mind wandered. "Maybe another trip....New adventures might....No, I couldn't possibly justify that to the creatocrats." She'd already had far more than her quota.

The energy of frustration walked her to the food punch and then to the water punch. Through the penthouse wall openings the station's interior was visible. It began to pale in simulated night. That was her favorite new thing since she had moved to the top of the station. People in the lower levels never knew that variations were possible. The sunlight cycle was reserved for the circular penthouse residents. And the artists could live there, provided their product was of sufficient quality....

And at that thought she returned to the screen. She contemplated the review and evaluation she had received the previous month and then thought about the ones coming up. "Maybe they're lenient with artists during their first contract." She was actually hoping for that because she had completed less than expected. It was less than they expected and certainly less than she expected. The volume of work was okay, but her testing had indicated she possessed extensive capabilities for original thought. The "O" quality work hadn't appeared yet. And she was getting worried.

With resolve she punched in another program.

?CHECK PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL  
PROFILES ASSOCIATED WITH BRAIN CIRCUITRY OF  
LITER-ART PERSONNEL REFERENCE NUMBER 24-  
30485-4083542?

"Damn!" The metabolic patterns were all on curve. "No way to blame it on something else."

Again she typed.

?PROBLEM--NO CREATIVE THOUGHTS?

The computer replied.

POSSIBLE CAUSATION:

- 1 NO CREATIVITY INHERENT
- 2 NO PURPOSE OR CAUSE
- 3 NO REWARD
- 4 INHIBITION

She stopped the program, jarred by the last. "Inhibition!" She was insulted. "A worklab on 23H for a year had supposedly worked all that out!" Then she took a deep breath and realized the computer had nothing personal in

mind. She was disappointed in her oversensitivity on the subject.

She scratched her neck. "How to get an 'O'?"

She punched her unfinished story in and asked for an analysis of elements. Maybe if one looked like an "O," she could elaborate on it...

CHARACTERS LOGICAL

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT LOGICAL

SETTING LOGICAL

THEME LOGICAL

And on it went for each and every aspect. She consoled herself that at least there wasn't a Stereo-Type among the "L's." But then there wasn't that "original" either.

Back to the problem. "What do you need to be original? Something different. Different than what? Everything else. Different than everything in the universe?"

She was getting nowhere. "Maybe I could do it on the formula instead of on the elements!" She analyzed the formulae available and then realized that an "O" formula was what she needed. "What would happen if I didn't use anything that was expected—didn't use anything in the formula?" She hesitated. "Ignoring the formulae? Good Gammas! Now there was an original (if stupid) idea."

Just then her supervisor appeared. She hoped he hadn't been eavesdropping on her thoughts. She would feel very foolish.

"I've been monitoring your screen."

She was relieved it was only her screen. She nodded at the man twice her age and with twice her experience.

"I think it would be accurate to characterize your workday so far as unproductive."

She made a face and mumbled in agreement.

"The elusive 'O'?"

"Right again."

"Your striving toward 'O' is understandable, but I think you're short-sighted in not admitting to yourself that 'L's' have merit also."

"I know. It's just that...."

He interrupted abruptly. "We're low on cellulose supplies; let's go get some paper and a few pencils."

"Why not just punch?"

"Because I want to go down and get them. You need the exercise to sort these thoughts, and I need the time it will take to talk to you without intrusions."

As they wound through the emergency tunnels, their words reverberated inside the hollow metal with no one to hear or interrupt.

"This supply trip has a lot to do with your problem."

"I don't see how."

"Because, as you know, you and I are the only people in our section who use paper. I thank my lucky stars every day that we're here with a Vis-arts lab or we wouldn't even be able to get it. I can't see them shipping tablets just for us."

"And what's the connection with 'O'?"

"You tell me. There must be a correlation, though I can't imagine what it is. Ever since they stopped teaching handwriting in school, the number of 'O' products has been dropping. Then with the manufacturers limiting the paper available, the rate's even worse. I really think someone should make a study of it."

"I think it's something neural," was all she knew to add.

They arrived at the storage area, and the computer inventory asked for I.D. and request card. They received tablets and pencils and wound their way back up to the lab.

"Your 'O' worries may be abolished soon anyway. There's a meeting next week to decide if 'O' is still a realistic goal. The feeling in CC is that it's not possible any more."

"You mean the heading will be abolished altogether?"

"Yes. It's been so long since they've had one, they think they won't ever find one again."

"I'm not sure that's a reason to stop trying."

"Well, the educacrats feel it's defeating to have that unattainable standard programmed in. Makes people like you ever-so-frustrated. In fact, you're a great example for their logicase."

She had conflicting thoughts, so decided not to say anything. But after a space, in silence, the ideas would not remain inside.

"They've done it to themselves! Every time an original idea comes up, they use it to death—transpond it all over the galaxy until there's not a respirating soul that hasn't heard about it. Then it's assimilated and the poor 'O'-maker is assimilated too, sometimes kicking and screaming, into the computer lab." She was really angry because they did use up the artists.

"If you're referring to that primitive Bill Nogad, yes. That scenario is correct for him. However, I don't think there have been enough 'O's to generalize. The creatocrats would say that the general dissemination and assimilation of new creative ideas are necessary and beneficial. Unfortunately there are so few artworks that the immense population does scarf them up like hungry bungswahz."

"Well, maybe the solution is more writers," and she tried to sound softer and more conciliatory.

They re-entered the lab and settled down in front of the consoles.

"If you know where there are some new artists, I wish you'd tell me. I'm below quota right now and I've brain-scanned every breather in this quadrant. There are just not any more with the write circuitry."

"Then it's inherited," she guessed.

"I guess so," he slowly agreed. "I was sure for a long while that it was environmental. Mass education, mass communication, mass assimilation. I blamed the establishment of the galactic libraries as much as anything else. But I'm not sure that theory's valid any more."

The tone for inter-space sounded. He got up to leave.

"Do you want refreshment?"

"No, I haven't done anything yet. I think I'll work a while more."

He shook his head. "You really are 'O'-oriented."

No comment came to her mind. She looked up at him and he was obviously debating something with himself. She waited. He sat down again.

"All right. A few suggestions then. There are several ways to approach the 'O'." He qualified his advice. "Of course, they're all based on my idea of what 'O' is. One of these programs might work for you."

"There's a program for 'O'?" She was astonished.

"Not a computer program. You program yourself.

Actually, there are several strategies. You must keep reminding yourself as you write. The first idea is to always choose an element that is not on the screen."

"Choose something that's not a choice?"

"Exactly. If it gives you four choices, then make up your own as a fifth."

"Will the computer accept it?"

"Not on automatic but you can override manually."

"Sounds a bit bizarre." She had never heard of such an option, and she really didn't believe him. Yet she knew that he had written some 'O's a long time past.

"Actually, that's the least radical. Plan number two is to compute things illogically, either at random or totally unexpected."

"Deliberately be illogical?"

"Of course, if it were logical, it would be 'L' and not 'O'."

"Sure." She wasn't really following his thoughts now. But she was trying not to show it. These ideas seemed of little practical value to her. Still she persevered. What's the next one?"

"Be silly."

"What's silly?" She really thought he was making up words now.

"Nonsensical. It's an obscure reference having to do with humor."

She was going to ask about humor but decided it might make her appear foolish. So she stopped. In the silence she reviewed what he had said. What disappointing options they were. Nothing she could use.

"Of course, there's one more." He paused and she listened carefully. The other ideas hadn't really appealed to her. Maybe this one was the one she could use. Perhaps this plan was the key to her "O."

"Short-circuit the machine."

She was appalled. It was incredulous that her supervisor was saying such a thing.

"Now, I did not tell you that. If anyone asks, you got that idea completely on your own."

"I wouldn't know how in any case." And she wouldn't if she could.

"Wasn't your degree in computer/lit?"

"Yes, but the emphasis is on interp, not process."

"Oh." He sounded very disappointed. And then he brusquely tried to close the conversation. "Well, I've given you the ideas—do what you will." He started out.

"Why tell me?" she called.

He stopped at the door. "I tell everyone. They don't care or they don't believe."

She continued, still puzzled. "Why now?"

"Because your frustration is so high. It will soon be inhibitory. You'd better change a variable soon."

He began to leave again, but she stopped him with another question. "Is this how you got your 'O'?"

He hesitated and pursed his lips. "No. But a lot has changed." He shrugged and waited for her response.

She thought for a moment, but nothing came to mind. She looked back at him blankly and said, "Oh."



**Watercourt**

Bored by once-fascinating luminous  
rocks of depths  
I rise to the surface  
for breath  
I circle endless circles  
Sun tingles my back  
Gills are clogged by scum upon the waters  
or subconscious fear of the barracuda  
who lurks below.  
(I've never known a barracuda  
—only a shark or two.)

If he sees me as a flighty fish  
flitting on the water  
He'll watch amused for hours  
but never pull me under.

I can know him still  
My gaze on his back in wonder.

*Lee Anne Moore*



*California Claret, black and white photograph by Allen M. Ford*

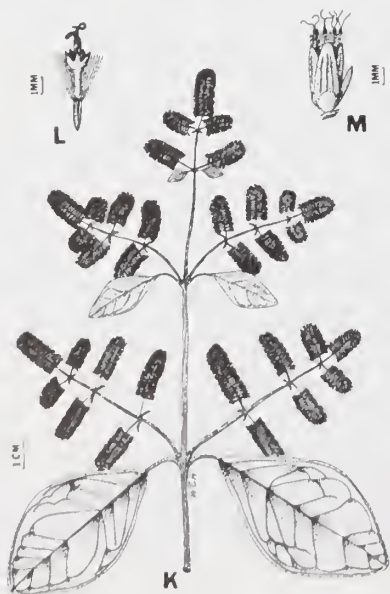
**Elizabeth**

There is that lack  
 Of her button nose  
 In everybody's business,  
 Never having any of her own.  
 And there is a want  
 Of a chin held high  
 When stockings ran  
 That made a feed-sack dress  
 Seem quite in style.  
 But more the absence  
 Of blue eyes that looked  
 On all of that  
 And never flinched.  
 We lost a lot, we knew,  
 But most, we lost a lot of blue.

James R. Bartholomew



*Mikania lindleyana* DC.; H, habit; I, flower; J, head.



*Mikania szyszyłowiczii* Hieron., K, habit; L, flower; M, head.



*Mikania cercifolia* W. Holmes; A, habit;  
 B, detail of node; C, head; D, flower.

**BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION**

Botanical illustrations are scientific drawings made with great effort to conform to nature yet be as aesthetically pleasing as possible.

Represented here are original illustrations of three species of *Mikania*, part of a detailed work being compiled describing the 500 or so species of the genus. Note that each illustration has a habit sketch, enlargements of flowers, and a scale.

Walter C. Holmes

## NSU FACULTY

### Grimmett Pardue

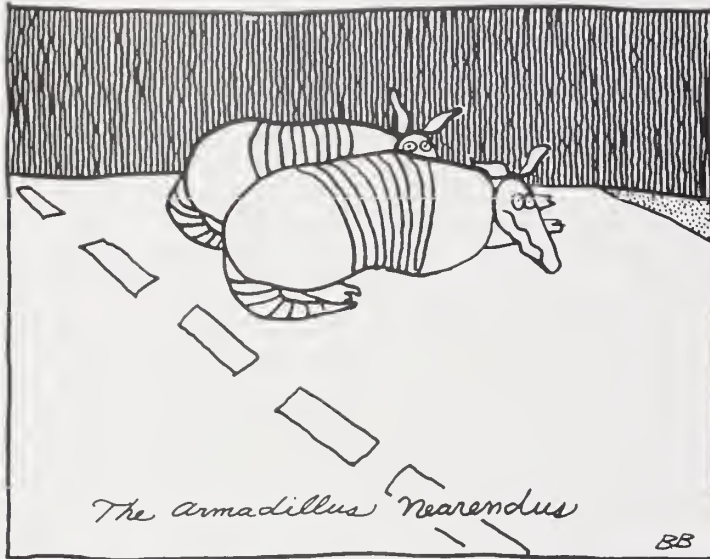
Grimmett Pardue was a solitary,  
 But one night on the saloon side  
 Of Boulware's store he beseeched  
 His glass uncommonly,  
 Even for him.  
 What he wanted to forget  
 We could only guess at:  
 Too long the fever of living alone,  
 Of waiting for the things of his life  
 To break down or wear out,  
 Too much looking back  
 And too little up ahead,  
 All that a man who keeps  
 His own company is a prey to:  
 But he wasn't completely alone,  
 Though at times we felt we  
 Only lived with the shadow of the man.  
 There had been the girl but she died young....  
 There had been the land  
 He gambled and drank away...  
 Now there was this sullen and hang-dog look,  
 The strangle-hold of the intolerable,  
 That four-corners-of-the-room look  
 When all of the corners are full....  
 Broken he was,  
 By whatever went amiss  
 In his life; though, for his life,  
 He couldn't have told you  
 What it was. It was clear  
 It had come to a point and pierced him,  
 Sure as the needle of regret, right through....  
 We saw him now; we saw him there  
 Against a frieze of bottles,  
 A faint gleam in his oily hair,  
 One eye fixed on something;  
 One eye fixed on nothing at all.

Neill Cameron

## NSU FACULTY

## "ARMADILLOS"

Bill Bryant



ARMADILLO TYPES

NATIVES DISPLAYING GIANT ARMADILLO TAILS  
IN CLOUTIERVILLE.





### Death of a Comic

Fat Freddie found his cat lying  
In wet, green grass on the cold side  
Of the poor road rich with pot-holes.  
With skid marks tracing destiny  
This fat, fuzzy fellow was caught  
Stalking, wild eyes open, alert.  
For the beast within nine lives had  
Mind not perverse with alcohol  
Nor palate to swallow Garfield's  
Diet of whisker laughs ill-timed.  
With words for his wife now crying  
Fat Freddie found his cat lying.

Allen M. Ford

*Untitled black and white photograph by Allen M. Ford*

**Star of the East****I**

What can I tell you, heart of my heart?  
 I know little of your beginnings.  
 It is unlikely that you will ever know yourself.  
 Yet, I know that day will come.  
 I gird myself against that day.  
 I must let you search,  
 although I know that the quest will be fruitless.  
 You have no known past.  
 There is nothing that I can do to change it.  
 The Chinese call it joss:  
 your fate, your luck.  
 All I can do is give you a strong sense of self.  
 That is all you will have to protect you.  
 You must rely on that and time.  
 It is all I can give you.  
 For...you are spirit of my spirit  
 and soul of my soul.  
 And that, my child...runs deepest of them all.

**II**

I took you to the cemetery  
 to see your names etched in stone.  
 I wanted you to have a sense of family,  
 even though those underground  
 would never recognize you as belonging.  
 Foolishness on my part,  
 they all said.  
 Taking a child to a graveyard  
 to show her marble stones with parts of her names  
 etched there.  
 But...it's all she'll ever have...  
 only the names she bears bind her to the family.  
 The rest is built day to day.  
 This child without a past  
 will have one...if only on tombstones.  
 Everyone needs something to point to  
 and say...that's where I came from, that makes me a part.  
 Women who give up their children  
 for reasons of their own cannot pass this on.  
 In a society where past is present,  
 this is my duty.  
 It is her right;  
 I am merely a tool.  
 She needs no validation.

*Kathleen Smith*

## Oscillation

**H**e wants my children. I am not competent as a parent he says.

My daughter tells me, her flushed face tortured with tears that burn down cheeks still baby-like, that she loves us both: why does she have to make a choice?

She is older than I am now; her common sense and equanimity often make me feel neurotic. In the night of years she flew over me. She is more my mother than I am hers.

But now she grieves with choice and decision. She is an eight-year-old adult.

If only I could pretend that marriage is happiness, we might live unchanged a little longer.

"Let them go...let him have them," say my friends, some mothers, some not. "Women are liberated now. It's o.k.. It's accepted." God knows I haven't been much of a mother these past few years, possessed always with a sense of time flying by, searching, fearing to stop and look back, driven... though I've found nothing, have tried to live without...the children should be enough.

I've juggled home, school, and social life as the magazines say, but bouncing balls fall all over the floor, spilling sobs and screams and guilt, which the magazines never hear.

I've often felt sorry I fell into a motherhood for which I have no natural talent. It's too hard--it's nature's form of revenge on those of us who are destined to love our children more than life itself, yet are denied that intangible thing...the maternal instinct.

Their father has the knack of parenting. He never has to think about his response or reaction or parental role.

When the children are gone, I embrace the silence. I hug it to my shoulders like a lynx. There is no disarray, no laundry, no noise from duelling radios, trumpeting stereos, or turbulent televisions, no bickering to break up, no charging



*Mother and Child, pen and ink by Angela Rome*

through the house like stampeding bulls, and no air-raided squawks of "Mom" to quicken the blood. Plus no thuds of sneakers pounding up the stairs, no hungry mouths crying that I never cook.

I eat strawberries over the sink and pet the lynx.

I also double-lock the door and burn a night light. The windows and floors creak and crack. Just around the stairs crouch tigers from forgotten nightmares. A bang sounds somewhere near and the tiger leaps alive and rapes my luscious quiet.

I'm glad when the kids come home.

I am almost certain my son should be with his father. But what will he do when discipline doesn't fulfill his sensitive little soul? He appears unconcerned with the chaos of our lives, but his twitching lip belies his bravado.

I went crazy with his colic in the cradle and have been only a little less crazy since. He is hyper, ill-tempered,

impatient with the imperfection which is all around him. He is my mirror image. No sooner has he bellowed at me than his arms are around my waist telling me he loves me with all the sincerity of the frustrated child that he is. When he is not hollering, he is melting glacial hearts.

My daughter, my little friend, will be the hardest to relinquish — that miraculous mistake of a baby, the one who slept or smiled, who grew easily, who didn't even cry at the very moment she was so rudely pushed into the world.

She can take care of herself, bake her own cookies, make my coffee — this witty little ballerina who has always known when to leave me alone. She has applauded my efforts, even as they intruded upon hers, at making something from the nothing that was my life.

But...they aren't gone yet, my aging babies;

I'm still holding on.

By Janice Denison

**The Starling**

In back corner weeds of playground  
we found her glossy black feathers stiff  
with death. We wept hot tears,  
looked deep in dull eyes,  
and said she was a starling  
named Birdie.

Each day for a week,  
we pulled her from the secret hollow  
to cradle her in cupped hands  
and say holy words, until that morning,  
when running in black leotards to our  
sweet solemnity, we saw a crowd of ragged boys  
aiming rocks, calling our starling,  
"just a damn old crow with lice."  
Tight-fisted screams of indignation.  
The profanity, the profanity,  
and then the doubt.

I kept hidden in my desk all afternoon  
the cigar box which held the broken body,  
and that night, while our parents slept,  
we slipped down to the creek  
and in the shadows of scudding clouds,  
lay the stiffly posed question mark  
beneath a large black stone.

*Shari Miller*

**Field Of Cotton**

The field is still, with whiteness from the sun,  
Laden with soft richness, waiting to be done.  
The straight rows are weathered from the heat;  
Brown stalks have lined the earth underneath.

Her Black face is worn from work and age;  
Her frame is too frail to lift her sack with grace.  
Life must go on till death marks its claim;  
Death brings comfort to a life spent in pain.

Her frame is still, from untold strife;  
She ceases to suffer in this journey through life.  
She should have lived; the cotton should have died;  
The field is still; King Cotton has survived.

*Amanda Young*

**Dormant Growth**

Well, the days aren't any shorter  
and the nights aren't nice and long,  
the mornings aren't as sweet  
and none of us have a home.  
Life isn't moving any faster  
and the clocks continue to chime  
the waves still rape the beaches,  
and no one knows the time.

*Ellen Dollar*



**Introspect**

though I cannot see your world  
 I have worlds hidden away  
     that no one sees but me

wings of wax shine golden  
 a symbol of dreams  
     that never were

Spring comes--  
     and with it - the exodus of snow  
 Silver trees weave tangled webs  
     and kiss the sky

Somewhere inside  
     a vision stirs  
     and    for a fleeting moment  
     the tide subsides...  
         but memories never go away

Night looms ominous on the horizon

    like icarus, you flew too soon

Suson Fortenberry

**Lifetime**

Some say time takes life,  
 But I say life takes time.  
 There are two simple reasons  
 For this rhyme.  
 A pessimist's life is taken by time.  
 An optimist's time is stolen by life.  
 Life is my thief,  
 Because life is so brief.  
 So let's take the time  
 and say "hail to the thief."

James Townsend

**Guardian**

I saw you yesterday.  
     I was raking leaves in the front yard  
     and you passed by and waved.  
     And I waved back.

I remember seeing you by the mailbox  
     when I walked out to mail a letter.  
     I asked you in and we talked.

And the times when I really needed a friend--  
     you offered your shoulder  
     to cry on -- and somehow the hurt  
     passed away.

I was talking to the man down the road  
     and he said he saw you leaning on  
     the fence when his mare gave birth.

And for some reason tonight I woke up  
     and saw you just standing there --  
     watching me. Thanks, Lord,  
     I know you're there.

Renoe Quick

**The Grouch**

She had the eye of a needle,  
 And nothing went past her nose  
 Unsniffed.

If the day was a touch too hot,  
 the neighborhood heard it.  
 If a breath of wind was too unruly,  
 She'd staple it down to an official  
 Complaint.

Shari Miller



*Untitled black and white photograph by Tim Dyer*

### **Repetition**

When I leave  
 I shall close the door gently.  
 Then I'll stand on the top step  
     of the flight without other steps.  
 My cold hand on the rail that is missing,  
 I'll descend  
     without trying to call goodbye.  
 Just as you did.  
 Just as you did.

*Carol Wells*

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**FALL CONTEST FIRST PLACE POETRY**

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**Fall Comes Without You**

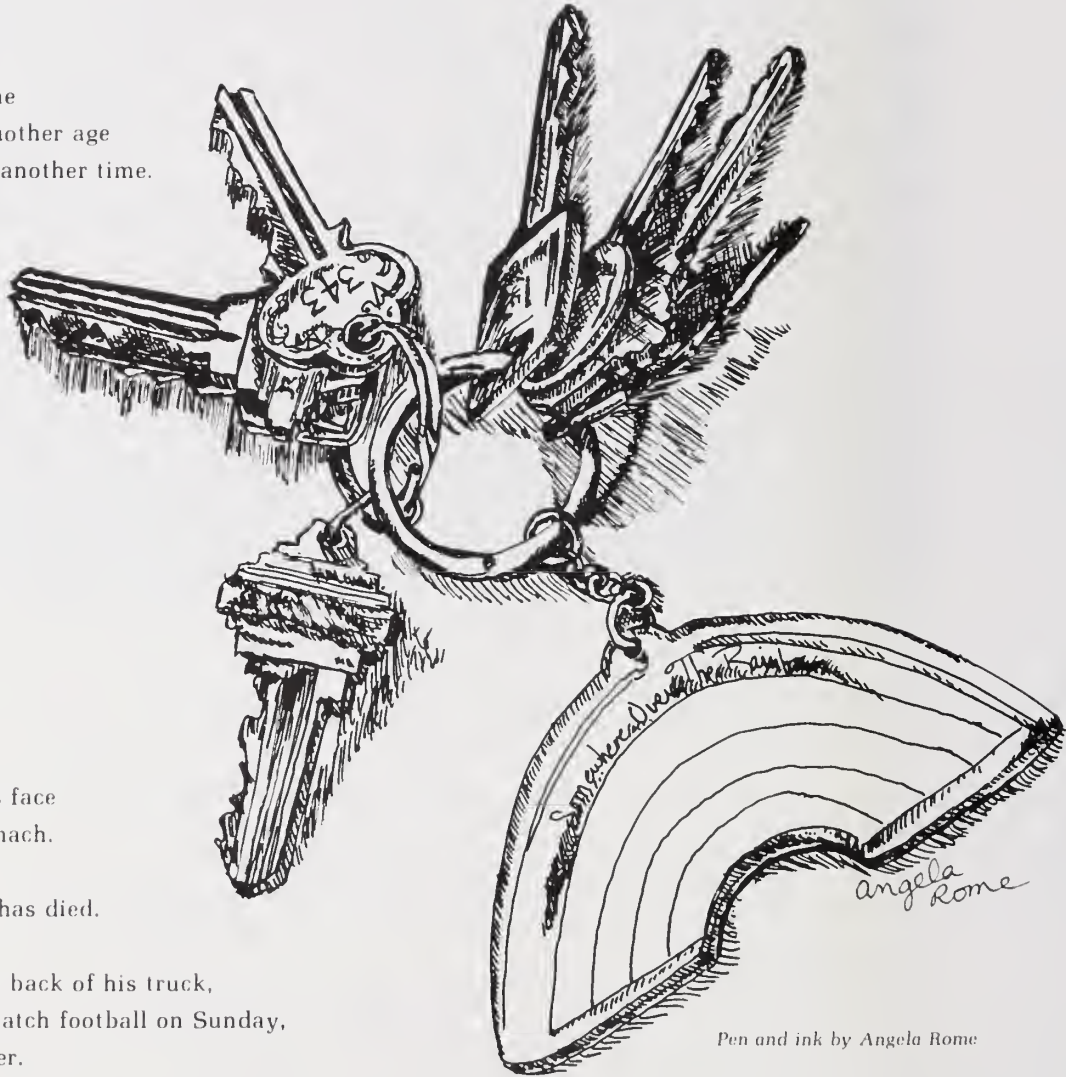
I sit smoking on your green grass comforter  
repeating, Mama! Oh Mama!  
The scene plays in my mind, infinite in time.  
A March morning when coffee assumes  
the aroma of routine and those funny little  
slippers pad about the apartment.  
What were you thinking?  
A moan emits from those lips I know so well,  
momentarily drowning out "The Price is Right."  
Your sudden weight rumples the  
freshly made twin bed.  
What were you thinking?  
Gasping for breath, spittle staining the new spread,  
a present of Christmas past with everyone grinning  
and pretending through an alcoholic haze.  
What were you thinking?  
Did you see Papa rushing about,  
inadequate in trouble as always?  
Did this bring the usual curse to your lips?  
Or in that final moment, were you able to laugh  
at the irony and unfairness of life?  
What were you thinking?  
I need to believe a happy thought was of me.

*Myrna Schexnider*

### Soliloquy

I run to you  
 In the soft splendor of night  
 My feet are like wings  
 My heart, like a burning light  
 Two lovers greet.  
 Your touch is like poetry  
 Your voice, like a song  
 You whisper, "To you I belong,"  
 The heavens shake.  
 Then I awake  
 I am alone  
 And you are not mine  
 My soulmate of another age  
 My soulmate of another time.

Marjorie Fontenot



Pen and ink by Angela Rome

### Ongoing Elegy

The phone rings  
 And the shock on your mother's face  
 Registers in the pit of your stomach.  
 You run from the house  
 Knowing the one you love best has died.

Never again will you ride in the back of his truck,  
 Or play dominoes before bed, watch football on Sunday,  
 Or share your love for each other.  
 You cry for the last time, never to feel such pain again.

At the funeral, you fail to understand how people  
 Can bring food, shake hands, converse; your Grandfather is dead.  
 You never do understand, even as you watch the last dirt cover the grave,  
 And, years later, write this poem.

Paul Pickering



## On Fathers and Daughters

**M**y pen and I are screaming for recognition that I'm real; my relationship with my father might even be worth writing about. First off, I'm not a patrophiliac, or yet one more writer with a touching tale of childhood remembrances of ice cream in the park with Daddy on Sundays.

True enough, when I was small I would slip downstairs at night when I was sure that Pop was watching Johnny Carson alone. I'd say I was having trouble sleeping, and in a few minutes I'd be having ice cream and cookies with Pop (always an excellent sedative). And Pop's careful air of practicality and decided authority would be ever-present. So would my careful "air" of respecting and obeying that authority.

One night after he carried me back to bed following ice cream and cookies, I remember Pop got stern about my not wearing something warmer for bed. With meek respect I pulled on the long-sleeved shirt he handed me, then turned over in bed, feeling full and contented from Pop, ice cream and cookies.

And then a few years later, he finally came home from Vietnam—surprised all of us by simply striding through the front door, nobly handsome in that dark green uniform with the brass buttons. We were in the middle of spring cleaning; scrub brushes and brooms were dropped, and everyone scrambled over to hug Pop in that moment of astonished, real happiness. Soon after, Pop was admonishingly asking why Darren's room was such a mess. Quickly, the small, rude pain I felt in that instant was replaced by relief that I still knew Pop.

Many years later, Pop told me of the time when I was five, lying in the hospital after a car accident. Very sensibly, he had asked me how I might be made more comfortable. He then used his practicality and unshakable authority to transfer my request for water to the doctor, who firmly informed Pop that liquids would be fatal for me. The fond reverence I felt then for Pop's common sense, I felt many more times over the years.

Pop used to tease me a lot about being bald-headed and beady-eyed as a baby. Well okay—true enough, I was introduced to even his girlfriends as his "little sweetheart." Few times did Pop



*Untitled black and white photograph  
by Peyton Cunningham*

return home without something for me. I'll never forget the time he brought me a giant peach. But even in those relaxed times—even while we laughed, I wondered about that strict effort underneath. I wondered why the "air" never went away. Even back then I felt that Pop needn't have cultivated his formula for parental respect so sternly.

When he often spoke of finishing only the second grade, I was fascinated each time and awe-filled from the first time. "But he's so smart," I marveled. Why didn't he know how I felt?

Such a layer of carefulness, Pop—broken through when I brought you all A's home—or just before I went to bed... years ago.

I began hearing indirectly from you that you were proud of me, or that I should never doubt your love for me; claims for respect came at less frequent intervals. I would ride with you to the race track in the car, which was always filled with smoke from your Kool cigarettes, and the radio would blare, as if, unreasonably, to be heard better.

But I'm in college now, and you talk of completing only the second grade much less. When I bring home some A's, you're silent most of the time. This past summer you hardly spent any productive time with me, unless it was to beat me at the TV game. Well, you have been the only sense of permanence I have, and I'll never outgrow you. A lot has evolved. You get inside yourself now—I see you when I'm there. Over the years I've made mental marks, believe it or not—changes in your walk, your fleeting interests, your expressions. I wonder if you felt closer to me when my careful air latched onto yours, or, sadly, during that period of years when I learned to live with our layer. How come you never knew, Pop, how much bigger than I you were—and still are?

Indirectness, respect, carefulness—plague us now.

Such a layer of carefulness, Pop—now broken through by my realization...the older you got, the more terrible you became at assuming that practical expression. Around me, at least. The last time I was home I kissed your cheek... you are terrible at it now, Pop.

By Linda Verrett

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**SPRING CONTEST FIRST PLACE ONE ACT PLAY**


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## The Other Side of the Blackboard

Ellen Brown - teacher (White)  
 Stacey - student (White or Black)

Frances Ramsey - teacher (White)  
 Rhonda Evans - student (Black)

A young boy - student (White or Black)

*At Rise: An empty classroom with an unfinished bulletin board. The teacher's desk is stage left, the unfinished bulletin board is stage right, and fifteen to twenty desks are between the teacher's desk and the bulletin board. In addition, a window is next to the bulletin board upstage right.*

ELLEN: *(Peeping her head through the partially open door)* Party Pooper.

FRANCES: Oh, hi, Ellen, come on in.

ELLEN: I brought you a piece of cake, Party Pooper. Why didn't you come?

FRANCES: I thought maybe I would just finish grading these essays and make my class plans for tomorrow. I don't know how I do it, but lately I find myself behind in my work. *(Referring to the cake)* This looks good. Who made it?

ELLEN: I believe some of the students in one of Sharon's home ec. classes made that error. It's too bad it doesn't taste like it looks.

FRANCES: Oh, come on, Ellen, Sharon does wonders with those girls. I'm sure the cake is fine.

ELLEN: Sure. *(Sarcastically)* I was getting some of the hors d'oeuvres and I accidentally tipped my punch over. Now, before I could even think "napkin," my piece of cake had soaked it up. *(Points at the cake.)* It works like Bounty.

FRANCES: *(Laughs)* Now, that's not nice. That woman has her hands full with those girls.

ELLEN: And Coach Booker. *(Frances shakes her head disapprovingly.)*

ELLEN: You should have seen them at the faculty party. Why they simply ostracized themselves from us. If you ask me, there were two parties going on. It's absolutely shocking! But Frances, have you heard about Rhonda Evans?

FRANCES: No, what happened?

ELLEN: Well, you know she's seeing Coach Booker, too.

FRANCES: So I've heard, but rumors run...

ELLEN: Well, I've seen. But Frances, this morning she and Sharon had it out. The things they said to each other were nothing less than appalling.

FRANCES: I don't want to...

ELLEN: I was shocked! Well, I must say that Coach Booker has definitely stirred up some dust. But why that man has such interest in a seventeen-year-old girl, I don't know. The coloreds are something else aren't they? The way they conduct themselves never ceases to amaze me. You know I've also

heard that Sharon's pregnant or maybe it was Rhonda. But coloreds have a record for...

FRANCES: Blacks! Blacks! Ellen, Blacks! Why should they be called colored? Colored what for heaven's sake? Pink, blue, purple, colored what? We're white and they're black.

ELLEN: Oh, what difference does it all make? We're all people.

FRANCES: *(Pause)* I guess you've got a point, Ellen. We're all colored. But then, I've always believed that whites should be called colored, too. We are colored after all.

ELLEN: *(Smiles awkwardly)* Sometimes, Frances, you can say the funniest things.

FRANCES: I suppose, but rest assured, I'm no competition for you. *(Stacey enters carrying a large brown box under her arm and a pad of tacks and pins.)* Stacey? Don't you have respect for my right to privacy anymore?

STACEY: Huh? Oh, Mrs. Ramsey, I didn't know you'd be in here. I thought you were going to the faculty party. I was just going to finish up the bulletin board so that you can give me my extra points. How many points do I get anyway?

FRANCES: *(Slightly annoyed by the question)* Five.

STACEY: Five points for this whole board! Mrs. Ramsey, that's not fair. Yesterday you told me I could get twenty. That's not fair! I had to come up with the idea, the color scheme...I've been cutting out letters for two whole days...

FRANCES: *(Looks at Ellen)* Have you ever heard of two half days?

STACEY: I don't believe this. It's not fair! It's not fair!

FRANCES: Sweetie, I was just joking, joking. You'll get your twenty points. I was just joking.

STACEY: You should give me five extra points for harassment.

FRANCES: You are about to lose five points.

STACEY: What!

ELLEN: Stacey, why aren't you in class?

STACEY: *(Turns and replies bitterly)* Excuse me, Mrs. Brown, but this is my study hour.

ELLEN: Why aren't you studying?

By Daphne DeVerger



STACEY: *(Pouses ond stores)* Miss Gates and Rhonda Evans were talking and she told me to excuse them. Miss Gates, that is, because Rhonda Evans couldn't tell me nothing. So, well anyway, I came up here to finish this board. Is that okay with you?

ELLEN: *(Intrigued)* Sharon Gates and Rhonda Evans?

STACEY: *(Turns ond foces the boord, ond then soys mockingly)* Yeh, Sharon Gates and Rhonda Evans!

FRANCES: That will be quite enough, Stacey.

ELLEN: Well, Frances, I hope you enjoy the cake. I've got to run. Those kids have probably run my teacher's aide half mad by now. I'll see you.

FRANCES: Do me a favor please? If you see Rhonda, tell her not to forget our appointment.

ELLEN: You and Rhonda Evans?

FRANCES: Don't forget, Ellen; it's important.

ELLEN: I have no intention. I'll see you later. *(Rhondo enters while Ellen is standing ot the door.)* Oh, Rhonda, I was just...

RHONDA: *(Drily greets her)* Mrs. Brown... *(Ellen nods ond continues to store inquisitively.)*

FRANCES: Ah, Stacey, could you excuse us for a moment, please?

STACEY: Sure why not? I'm not going to ever finish this board. I'll never get my points. I probably won't even graduate now.

FRANCES: You can come back in a moment.

STACEY: *(Looks at Rhondo)* You sure get around.

RHONDA: *(Sits)* The football players say the same about you.

STACEY: At least it ain't the coach! *(Rhondo stonds immediotely ond Stocey runs out loughing.)*

RHONDA: Girl, you better chill out or freeze in, like ya grizzly bear-looking mama. 'Cause I don't take nothing off of nobody!

FRANCES: *(Shakes her heod in disgust ond emborrossment)* Damn it, Rhonda! *(Fronces ond Rhondo store ot eoch other knowingly.)* I don't believe this.

RHONDA: What? I can't help what's happening.

FRANCES: Ron-Ron...

RHONDA: Don't call me that. I'm not a little girl anymore. Sorry to throw a rock into your serene little pool, but, Godmother, I'm grown.

ELLEN: *(Shocked)* Godmother! *(Rhondo ond Frances look at Ellen.)* Excuse me. *(Ellen smiles awkwardly and leoves.)*

RHONDA: I hate that woman. She is always in my business. I'ma be done knocked her out.

FRANCES: What have I told you about talking like that? What did your mother tell you? "I'ma be done knocked her out." That's not English, Rhonda.

RHONDA: It's Black English.

FRANCES: It's not Standard English! *(She grobs o grammar book from her desk and holds it up.)* I teach Standard English. This is Standard English. *(Mockingly)* "I'ma be done knocked her out." People talk like that because they can't do any better; you can.

RHONDA: It's Black dialect. It's not my fault...it's not our fault that you all can't understand it.

FRANCES: Watch your voice, watch your tone, and watch your attitude. Now as long as I'm on this earth, I don't want to hear it again.

RHONDA: *(Mumbles)* Prejudiced.

FRANCES: Excuse me, did you say something?

RHONDA: No.

FRANCES: Yes, you did; what did you say?

RHONDA: Nothing.

FRANCES: Damn it, Rhonda what did you say?

RHONDA: I said you're prejudiced.

FRANCES: Pre...what? What! I'm prejudiced?!!! *(She calms down.)* Oh. *(She begins o gome.)* Well, I don't know maybe, maybe. Yeh, I guess I am. Yeh, I admit it, I'm prejudiced. As a matter of fact, I always have been. I'm so prejudiced, Miss Rhonda, that I boycotted that little restaurant uptown and picketed with your pregnant mother, God rest her soul, before you were even born. Prejudiced...I'm so prejudiced that I marched for equal rights even though members of my family disowned me. I'm so prejudiced that I stood up before a black minister, in a black church, with a black family and became your godmother. So now, Rhonda, dear, how prejudiced are you?

RHONDA: Prejudiced enough to know prejudiceness when I see it.

FRANCES: Come here. *(She stonds, roge evident on her foce.)* Come here...I said, Come Here!

RHONDA: I'm not a little girl, Aunt Fran...Mrs. Ramsey. You can't call me to you and spank me anymore.

FRANCES: Is that right? I'll take my chances; come here! *(Stocey enters ond begins working on the board.)* Stacey, did I call you? Did someone tell you that I called for you?

STACEY: No, ma'am.

FRANCES: Then would you please go back to Sharon Gates's room. I'll let you know when you can come back.

STACEY: Ah, come on, Mrs. Ramsey.

RHONDA: You can stay 'cause I'm leaving.

FRANCES: *(Speaking to Stocey)* I'll call for you.

RHONDA: *(Stonds)* I'm gone.

FRANCES: Sit down! *(Stocey exits in o hurry.)* You're on thin ice, girl! I don't know what's wrong with you. I swear I don't, but I will fix it. I don't understand you. What's wrong with you? You used to be such a sweet girl. I don't know you anymore.

RHONDA: You've never known me.

FRANCES: Well, that's a real dipsy doodle. You're ridiculous.

RHONDA: That's right; call me ridiculous.

FRANCES: Well, you are; you are. And I don't know what your mother would have thought about this Coach Booker thing. You are a seventeen-year-old girl, Rhonda. He's in his twenties. I've had a half a mind to go and talk to him myself. He must be a fool. Doesn't he know that he could be reported? Go to jail? Lord have mercy.

RHONDA: Why don't you just stay out of this?

FRANCES: I wish I could. You have no idea of how much I wish I could. But I can't. I owe your mother. I owe Louise. Oh, no. I don't owe anything to her memory; that was her responsibility. I owe something to her life. To her life that's still living, expanding, flowing through you. No, Rhonda, I don't expect you to understand that. That would take compassion that you seem to have lost. Anyway, if the situation had been reversed, I would have expected her to keep an eye on my daughters. So...

RHONDA: Keep an eye on me. Is that what you're doing? That's okay, I don't need it. I don't need anybody.

FRANCES: Is that right? You don't need it. Could you possibly tell me how you've come to that conclusion?



FRANCES: Because I need proof. I certainly haven't seen any evidence of maturity. Yes, you need to be watched, Rhonda. It's just unfortunate that it has to be me.

RHONDA: Hey, don't do me any favors! "It's unfortunate"—for me.

FRANCES: Oh, I'm not blind. I know how you feel. You don't have to say a word. You've made your point perfectly clear, crystal, in fact. You've been avoiding me—you don't want to talk to me—if you see me in the hall, you walk the other way—Now I don't know where all of this anger for me comes from, but little girl, I'm too tired and too old to track you down. So if the idea tickles your fancy, and you act like it might, you can pick your behind up and walk out of here right now, and you won't have to look behind you to see if I'm following because, Rhonda Janet Evans, I won't be. *(Rhonda stands awkwardly while Frances continues grading papers. Rhonda opens the door...)* Rhonda, sit down! *(She looks up)* Just sit down!

RHONDA: I thought you said...

FRANCES: Sit down! sit down! *(She then mumbles to herself.)* I'm too old for this. *(After a long pause)* I didn't call you in here to yell at you. Now, after all these years you have to know that sometimes I say things that I don't mean. Don't you? *(Rhonda nods and sits down.)* I'm sorry.

RHONDA: Maybe, maybe you say things because you wish you felt them. Maybe you wish you could throw me out.

FRANCES: *(Pauses)* I can't really argue with that. I'm human; maybe I did. As a matter of fact, for about a split second I most certainly did. I have never been able to tolerate a disrespectful child, and these past few months you've been unbearable. Somewhere in that silly little mind of yours, you have decided that you don't need anybody. Ever since Louise died you've been somewhere else, unreachable. I don't know how to talk to you. How does a person talk to someone that can hardly stand to look at her? See, you're somewhere else. Even here in this room you're somewhere else.

RHONDA: Look, I may have...

FRANCES: Let me say this *(She stands)* I've reared two daughters, and I've been teaching for more than 20 years, but I don't know how to handle you, Rhonda. For some reason, and I've searched my mind trying to figure it out, you've decided that I'm..."the enemy." Now how I acquired that status I don't know. You've lost your mother and at a young age. You have a right to be a little angry. But not at me. I lost her, too. I'm hurting, too. Can't we share this? I love you. I love you like a niece; hell, maybe even a daughter. Now, maybe I'm taking liberties by saying this, but I think you need that right now. *(There's a knock at the door.)* Do you? *(The knocking continues.)* Do you?

RHONDA: I don't know.

FRANCES: *(Distracted)* Come in.

ELLEN: *(Peeping her head through the door)* Excuse me. *(She enters.)* Frances, I was wondering if I could catch a ride home with you today. There's something wrong with my car, and John doesn't think he's going to be able to pick me up. But now I don't want to take you out of your way.

FRANCES: No trouble. I've been planning to take some time out and go by that new mall. It's just a few blocks from your house so...*(She sits on the front of her desk.)* No trouble.

ELLEN: *(Looking out the window.)* Well!

FRANCES: What?

ELLEN: Come look at this!

FRANCES: What?

ELLEN: Hurry! Look at those two! *(Frances rushes to the window and Rhonda turns to see.)*

FRANCES: Who is that? Teenagers just refuse to be discrete.

ELLEN: Teenagers! That's Sharon Gates and Coach Booker. *(Rhonda runs to the window, and after seeing the two kissing, she turns quickly.)*

RHONDA: That ass! *(Frances signals Ellen to leave. Ellen is reluctant. Frances opens the door.)*

FRANCES: Please.

ELLEN: I've heard of diving for pearls, but tonsils? *(She leaves laughing.)*

RHONDA: That damn asshole! *(Frances places her hands on Rhonda's shoulders.)*

FRANCES: Baby, sometimes...

RHONDA: Get your hands off of me. Don't touch me. Don't ever touch me.

FRANCES: Rhonda!

RHONDA: Oh, don't start that mess with me. You're glad, you're glad I saw them. Aren't you? Isn't that what you wanted? Well, it's over between us now. I hope you're satisfied.

FRANCES: Do you actually think I want to see you hurt?

RHONDA: Damn straight!

FRANCES: Stop yelling!

RHONDA: Don't start that shit; just don't start that shit. Like you care if I'm hurt. You never cared before. So don't start that shit with me now.

FRANCES: Before? When?

RHONDA: A-h-h, I don't want to hear it!

FRANCES: Hold it down! *(Rhonda begins pretending things might float up by pressing the chairs around her down.)*

RHONDA: *(Mocking)* Hold it down! Hold it down! Go to hell! Frances slaps Rhonda. Rhonda raises her hand to slap her back and slowly takes it down.)

FRANCES: I've never hit you before, not ever. *(After a pause Frances begins to shake nervously.)* I'm so sorry, Rhonda. I've never hit you before. *(She sits behind her desk and puts her head in her hands.)* I've never ever hit you, not like that!

RHONDA: It's okay. *(Still facing the window.)*

FRANCES: Okay! I don't even believe in hitting children. Well, at least not slapping. "Spare the rod and spail the child." That's true; I believe that, but I don't believe in slapping.

RHONDA: *(She turns to look and takes pity on her.)* Aunt Fran, I said it was okay. It's okay. You're following mama's footsteps. Anyway, you've hit me before.

FRANCES: What!

RHONDA: Well, spanked.

FRANCES: When?

RHONDA: It's no biggie.

FRANCES: It's no biggie. Little girl, you are murdering the English language. It's no biggie. *(Mocking.)*

RHONDA: It's no big deal.

FRANCES: It's "no" big deal. No? *(Smiling.)*

RHONDA: It's not a big deal. Damn! You almost slap the taste out of my mouth and then you want me to speak

RHONDA: correctly. *(Teasing.)* Yeh, this is déjà vu for me. Yeh, you hit me. Beat me!

FRANCES: Stop playing, Ron-Ron; I don't feel like it.

RHONDA: You really don't remember, do you?

FRANCES: No, I don't.

RHONDA: That time at Six Flags. I was six, Betsey was ten, and Susan was eleven, I think. Yeh, if Betsey was ten, then Susan was eleven. Don't you remember? It was dark, and Bets and I ran off. When we came back...you spanked us. Well, it was only one lick for each of us.

FRANCES: *(Rueful.)* I didn't know what had happened to you girls.

RHONDA: And you didn't give us time to tell you, either.

FRANCES: Well, I was worried. I was very upset, and I believe it was pretty late when you two came stumbling up to me, jubilant and carefree — I wanted to kill both of you.

RHONDA: *(Laughing)* Shoot, you almost got killed yourself. *(Frances smiles.)* I thought that lady was going to jump you any minute.

FRANCES: Wasn't she big? She had to have been at least six-feet-two.

RHONDA: Six-feet-four and a hundred and eighty pounds! I'll bet you never hit a black kid in public again. *(Still laughing.)*

FRANCES: What surprised me was how fast she got involved. Before I could even look up, I was hearing "white bitch" this and "white bitch" that. Baby, if you hadn't said, "Don't hit Aunt Fran," it would have been curtains for me!

RHONDA: You could have handled her. *(Rhonda and Frances look at each other knowingly.)* Well, at least you didn't run.

FRANCES: I know black people believe in sticking together...*(She shakes her head in amazement.)* And that was the biggest, ugliest black woman I have ever seen in my life.

RHONDA: You were just scared. *(Laughing.)*

FRANCES: You're right! We all were!

RHONDA: Me scared? I was worried about you. But scared? Chicken shit!

FRANCES: Your mama used to say that.

RHONDA: Yes, I know. *(Laughs.)* That reminds me of something crazy.

FRANCES: What?

RHONDA: It's crazy.

FRANCES: Almost being beat to death by a big, black lady isn't the sanest thing I've ever gotten myself into. Come on, tell.

RHONDA: It's crazy; I don't know why I thought of this.

FRANCES: What?

RHONDA: Well, one time we were in church and Reverend Parker was sick. So the church had invited this guest speaker, well, guest preacher. This guy misquoted the Bible and gave his own interpretations. Mama just sat there shaking her head and fanning. Finally, he said that Paul who was really Saul had turned his back on God. I guess Mama lost control because she yelled right there in church, "That's chicken shit!" She was so embarrassed. I guess it slipped. I was, too.

FRANCES: Not as embarrassed as I was the time I went to

church with her and she started shouting. At first she was simply patting her foot and then she started saying, "Amen." I thought she was just playing with me. All I said was, "Louise, cut that out. God's going to strike you down for that. Girl, stop! People are looking." Then she threw up her hands and was screaming...a league of ushers rushed over to her. I got my purse, and left.

RHONDA: *(Amused.)* Yeh, she used to embarrass me with that stuff, too.

FRANCES: *(Remembering.)* She was something. Baby, you'll never know how much I miss that woman.

RHONDA: *(Resentful.)* I guess so; you two were friends for a long time.

FRANCES: Thirty-two years, God, thirty-two years. Louise was like a sister to me. No, more than that. There are very few sisters that were as close as we were. I remember once we were marching in Mississippi, and I had to go to the restroom. Well, anyway we got lost trying to find a place that we could both go into. There wasn't one store that would let Louise and me go into the same restroom. So there we were fighting and marching for the cause, and our will to stand up to racism was breaking because we both had to go to the restroom. Well, we kept looking for so long that as Louise would say, "It went up," and we didn't have to go anymore, but then we couldn't find the rest of the group. Well, some people started making fun of us.

RHONDA: White people?

FRANCES: Yeh, this time it was white people. Well, actually three white boys probably about your age. They called Louise a "nigger" and me a "nigger lover." They threw rocks; they spat at us, but we were trying to maintain our control. After all, we believed in non-violence. There was this big, huge in fact, white guy with a mouth full of snuff, and he spat on Louise. What can I tell you? Your mama lost her cool. She picked up half a brick from the edge of the street and aimed for his head. Your mama was always a good shot...on this particular day, she was unfortunately damn good.

RHONDA: Yeh, I think I've heard this before. Like instead of "Little Red Riding Hood"!

FRANCES: There was blood all over his shirt; it just flowed from his head. Louise didn't mean to do that much damage.

RHONDA: Yeh, then the KKK was after you...you hid out.

FRANCES: And to keep anyone from identifying us, we had to separate...

RHONDA: And it was so hard separating; yeh, I've heard it.

FRANCES: We didn't want anyone to connect us with the rest of the group because we knew that would have meant hell for everybody. So...we split up. God, I was so scared.

RHONDA: You both promised to meet each other, where was it? Oh, yeh, ah, you guys promised to meet up in some deadbeat town in Alabama.

FRANCES: That was the worst thing that ever happened to me. It was four days before I saw that child again. I was so afraid that she had been killed. I would listen to the radio just waiting to hear that her body had been found. I was scared for myself, scared for her, and scared that maybe the rest of the group was paying for our deed. That was hell. My money ran out. I didn't know where I was going to sleep, if I was going to eat. It was hell.

RHONDA: Well, now she's dead.



FRANCES: How can you say that like that? How can you be so nonchalant?

RHONDA: I'm not saying it any special way. It's a fact the woman is dead.

FRANCES: Rhonda! She was your mother!

RHONDA: She was your best friend, that's what she was.

FRANCES: You're jealous, aren't you?

RHONDA: The woman is dead.

FRANCES: You've always been jealous, haven't you? I tried to tell Louise that.

RHONDA: Oh, to hell with it. She never loved me anyway, not like she loved you.

FRANCES: Rhonda!

RHONDA: She didn't. Oh, she did all of the things "society" expects of a mother. She came to all of the PTA meetings; bought me new clothes without me asking for them. Time. That's all I ever really wanted. I wanted some of her time. Just talk to me. I just wanted her to talk to me sometimes, like she talked to you. I needed that; I deserved that. But all she ever did was yell. "Rhonda Janet, go get your shoes out of the living room." That was her, "Girl, get in there and wash those dishes!" "My goodness, girl, will you ever learn how to wash your clothes without ending up with pink socks?" Rhonda this and Rhonda that and Rhonda this and Rhonda that. I got tired of it! I got tired of her! She never complimented me. I can't remember the last time she complimented me. The hell with it!

FRANCES: Jesus Christ, I never knew you felt like this.

RHONDA: Do you know what she told me after she didn't have any more time? Lying there on her damn death bed! Do you know what she said to me? Do you know what she said? "Be sweet, Ron-Ron." Do you believe that shit? Then she asked me to kiss her and before...just before I could, she...she, she died. I was gonna tell her that I loved her. I was gonna tell her, "Mama, I love you." Couldn't she have just given me enough time to say that? "I love you." That doesn't take long to say. Why didn't she wait? But she was gone. I never thought she'd do that, not to me. It never occurred to me, never in my whole life did I think I wouldn't one day be given enough time to tell my mama I love her.

FRANCES: I never knew; I'm sorry. Baby, I'm so very sorry.

RHONDA: I've give all but my body and soul if she would come back for a few minutes. Even if she'd yell at me, that would be just fine. Just so I could say, "Mama, I love you." She could fade away forever, as long as she knew how much I cared. We argued so much, so many times, Aunt Fran. Day after day after day after day. We just couldn't communicate. I don't guess we really tried. But now she's gone, gone...

FRANCES: Baby, I wish I knew what to tell you. I'm just so sorry that happened to you. Jesus, I'm so sorry.

RHONDA: She's gone, gone forever.

FRANCES: What about eternal life?

RHONDA: *(Bewildered.)* What? What? Eternal life? You have got to be kidding. *(Rhonda laughs through her pain.)* Eternal life? Sometimes you try too hard. Aunt Fran, you try too damn hard.

FRANCES: I'm sorry, Rhonda. I'm just a silly old woman. I know you don't want to hear that right now. *(She stands and walks to the bulletin board and begins to move the letters*

*and characters.)* A silly old woman. *(Rhonda gets up and sits behind Frances' desk.)*

RHONDA: *(Smiling.)* No-o-o.

FRANCES: No, really I am.

RHONDA: Getting upset always makes me hungry. It never fails; isn't that weird? *(Rhonda begins to eat the cake.)* Man, this is good. Who made it?

FRANCES: Good? *(Finally turns to look at Rhonda.)*

RHONDA: Yeh, who made it?

FRANCES: Sharon Gates. *(Rhonda spits the cake into a napkin and throws it in the trash beside Frances' desk.)*

RHONDA: Slut cake.

FRANCES: *(Solmly.)* What are you going to do about that?

RHONDA: I don't know. Hate her, hate him, both of them.

FRANCES: Maybe I can get you out of her class. You do have her for home-ec., don't you?

RHONDA: Yeh. *(Pauses.)* How could he do me like that? How! That's all I want. I don't want any apologies, and I don't want any promises. I just want to know how people lie so easily.

FRANCES: I suppose it's something like lying to yourself. You really don't mean to do any harm, or maybe it's just convenient, but it always fall apart. It's just a matter of time. It's always just a matter of time.

RHONDA: Well, I'm not going to be the typical fool and cry. I just won't!

FRANCES: It's okay if you cry, Ron-Ron, that's only natural.

RHONDA: The only thing I have now is my pride, and I won't lose it. *(She gets up and begins to pace.)* We weren't making plans for marriage or anything like that, but we had something. I mean, we really had something.

FRANCES: Was it love?

RHONDA: Yes, I love him.

FRANCES: Do you?

RHONDA: Yes!

FRANCES: *(Assuming.)* Then you're going to fight for him?

RHONDA: No, I'm not. All I have is my pride now; that's all I have. He's made a fool of me.

FRANCES: But you love him?

RHONDA: I told you, yes!

FRANCES: *(Pauses.)* I don't think so.

RHONDA: You don't have to think so; I don't need your vote.

FRANCES: Watch your tongue.

RHONDA: I know what I feel. *(She sits behind the teacher's desk.)*

FRANCES: Just listen to me, okay? I'm not trying to judge, and I'm not trying to be cold and unfeeling, believe me. But there are just some things that should be said. You've been under a lot of pressure and stress these last six months. I don't think you're ready to be in love. You may think you need him, but you don't love him. No matter what sacrifices you made, you don't love him. You've just been clinging. Think about it, isn't that true?

RHONDA: Wait a minute! You can't tell me what I've been feeling. You don't know what I've been through for that man.

FRANCES: It's an ugly thought, but I think I do.

RHONDA: Please, woman. *(Placing her feet on the desk.)*

FRANCES: Feet off, woman. *(Rhonda places her feet on the floor.)* Now, I'm going to ask you something, and it may hurt, but I think I should ask.

RHONDA: Shoot.

FRANCES: You knew about Sharon Gates, didn't you? You had to know. I'm sorry, but it's true. That man is the biggest flirt, blatant flirt, since Casanova. And I know you knew...everybody knew, so why wouldn't you? And you knew you weren't the only teenie-bopper he plays with, too, didn't you? Come on, baby, be honest at least to yourself.

RHONDA: Oh, so I'm a fool, huh?

FRANCES: *(Sits in a seat near her desk.)* No, you're a scared, insecure seventeen-year-old girl who has chosen to be an adult but hasn't learned how yet. But you will. But you've got to learn to be honest to yourself. Don't worry about being strong; be honest. If you're honest enough to admit that sometimes you're weak, sometimes you're scared, sometimes you're lonely, my God, girl, that's as strong as you can be.

RHONDA: *(Pauses.)* I'm so tired.

FRANCES: *(Smiles wearily.)* I'm sure you are.

RHONDA: I've messed everything up, haven't I?

FRANCES: *(Smiles.)* Not quite.

RHONDA: Mama would have been so ashamed of me. I haven't done anything like she would have wanted me to. My grades have fallen. Grandma cooks everyday, as old as she is. I can't even cook a decent meal, and this Coach Booker thing...look at my life. I've just messed everything up. I guess she was right after all. I'll never be anything.

FRANCES: Oh, come now. Louise probably never really meant that.

RHONDA: Yes, she did. *(Rhonda places her feet on the desk.)*

FRANCES: No, no, I don't think so. Your mother was scared, scared for you. You were born with two strikes against you. You're black and you're a woman. She wanted the best for you. All parents want the best for their children. But sometimes we forget. We forget little things. Little things that I guess aren't so little. Like telling our children "the dishes were washed well." *(She grabs Rhonda's foot and pushes up her pants leg, revealing white socks.)* Things like, "You're doing your laundry a lot better." Sometimes parents forget. Probably you will forget when you become a parent. But it won't change your love for your child. Don't you know that your mother was proud of you? Don't you know that?

RHONDA: *(Plaintive.)* Well, then, why didn't she tell me? Why didn't she just say it? Just one time! That would have been enough to see me through this. If she just would have said it one time.

FRANCES: Maybe she couldn't and then again, maybe she just thought you knew.

RHONDA: Maybe...I guess that's all I've got now, huh? Maybe.

FRANCES: I know how she felt about you. She was bubbling over with praise for you. I can remember so many times. As a matter of fact, a few days before the accident, we were out on the patio looking at her plants and...I don't know, I wasn't paying that much attention to her, but she was talking about your gardening. All I can remember now

is her picking up a pot and saying, "She's better at this than I am." That's exactly what she said, "She's better at this than I am."

RHONDA: For real?

FRANCES: You really don't know, do you? Little girl, you were your mother's pride and joy. Everything you did brought her happiness. You were a part of her, that to her, was almost flawless. "She's better at this than I am." Your mother used to make me listen to you practice your piano lessons sometimes, as horrible as you used to sound. Every time you made some small improvement she'd make me listen, quietly, discretely, in the other room...so we wouldn't disturb you.

RHONDA: *(Smiling.)* I don't believe this.

FRANCES: She pushed you because she loved you. I've done the same to my children. God, I hope they understood. Children just seem to *(Stacey enters in haste.)* get on our nerves.

STACEY: I'm sorry, Mrs. Ramsey, but the bell is going to ring in twenty minutes, and I've got to finish this board. So you can send me to the office if you want to, but I'm finishing this board. I need my extra points. *(She rushes to the board.)*

FRANCES: *(Massaging her forehead.)* Ron-Ron, look in there and see if you see my box of aspirin. *(Referring to the inside of her desk drawer.)*

RHONDA: Nope.

FRANCES: Keep looking, please. Stacey's the only student I know that's going to graduate because of extra points. Just tens and twenties; that's all I have in my roll book. But they will eventually accumulate and produce Graduation Day. I just want to be there to give the diploma. *(Pauses.)* Are you two the same age?

RHONDA: *(Smiles and nods positively.)*

STACEY: Yeh, I just seem more mature. *(A young boy knocks and enters.)*

YOUNG BOY: Here you are! Oh, hi, Mrs. Ramsey. Excuse me. Rhonda, Coach Booker is looking for you. He told me to tell you that he needs the keys to the P.E. room.

FRANCES: Well, Rhonda's busy right now. So why don't you give them to him for her. Do you have them, Rhonda?

RHONDA: I'd better go.

YOUNG BOY: I don't mind. I could give them to him.

RHONDA: No, I'd better go. It's about the cheerleading stuff.

FRANCES: Why? Just send them by...

RHONDA: No, I have to talk to him. *(She stands and walks toward the door.)*

YOUNG BOY: Well, I've got to go, so I'll see you all. *(He exits.)*

FRANCES: Talk to him later; you need time now. *(She stands.)* Don't you realize *(Pauses)* you need time.

RHONDA: I'm sorry. *(She exits.)*

FRANCES: Rhonda. *(She walks over to her desk and sits. She places her head in her hands and moans.)* It's time for me to retire.

STACEY: *(Still facing to board.)* Teacher's pet. *(Rhonda enters, pauses as Frances looks up.)*

RHONDA: I...I...*(Rhonda rushes over and hugs Frances.)*

*(SLOW FADE AND CURTAIN)*

THE END



## NSU ALUMNI

### Darkness

darkness slowly falling  
     last light caught  
     now let go  
 waves wash sand from between my toes  
 but now it's returned  
     by the waves

what i suppose is the ebb and flow  
 is watching you come, watching you go

standing in the sand  
 watching the waves

*Karen McAlister*

### Sandy's Song

I want to stay in my own home  
 I will try very hard.

The man across the street  
 will mow and rake my yard.

My daughter calls me twice a day  
 and buys the things I need.

When you consider all these things  
 I manage well indeed.

As long as my friend up the street  
 is here to pay each bill,

the neighbor who lives down the street  
 keeps my dog when I am ill,

don't speak to me of nursing homes  
 or care around the clock.

I have everything I need  
 right here in my own block.

*Sallie Watts Willis*

### Home on Wheels

Here, in rust and ruin,  
 are the remains  
 of a covered wagon---  
 a home once filled  
 with dreams  
 and plans  
 and hope for tomorrow.  
 Here, in pain and pleasure,  
 was a home inlaid  
 with wall-to-wall love.

*Blanche B. Landers*

### Columns:

#### A Legacy from the Past to the Future

Yesteryear  
 Lingers in shadowed, massive form,  
 Scarred by fate's unkind decree.  
 And jutting from a reddish mound,  
 Three columns stand proud and free.  
     And a door behind them  
     Is open for wisdom to endure.

Today  
 Struggles with the invasion of change.  
 The lights of desire seek the ideal way  
 As concrete arms guide restless minds  
 To challenge the ordeals of life's play.  
     And a door behind them  
     Is open for truth to speak.

Tomorrow  
 Lurks within the soul of night.  
 Time still has wealth to bestow  
 As the giant monoliths continue to herald  
 Each new dawn's eager flow.  
     And a door behind them  
     Is open to give the answers.

*Roy Holland*



*Caldwell Fire, black and white photograph by André Davis*

## Power Play

Harvy had POWER. His wasn't the low magnitude, brutish power of pushing the little snot-nosed punks around in the schoolyard...(he smiled, remembering the time he had socked the Dimsett kid square in the mush...the feel of teeth and lips folding beneath his fist had been beautiful)...this was POWER.

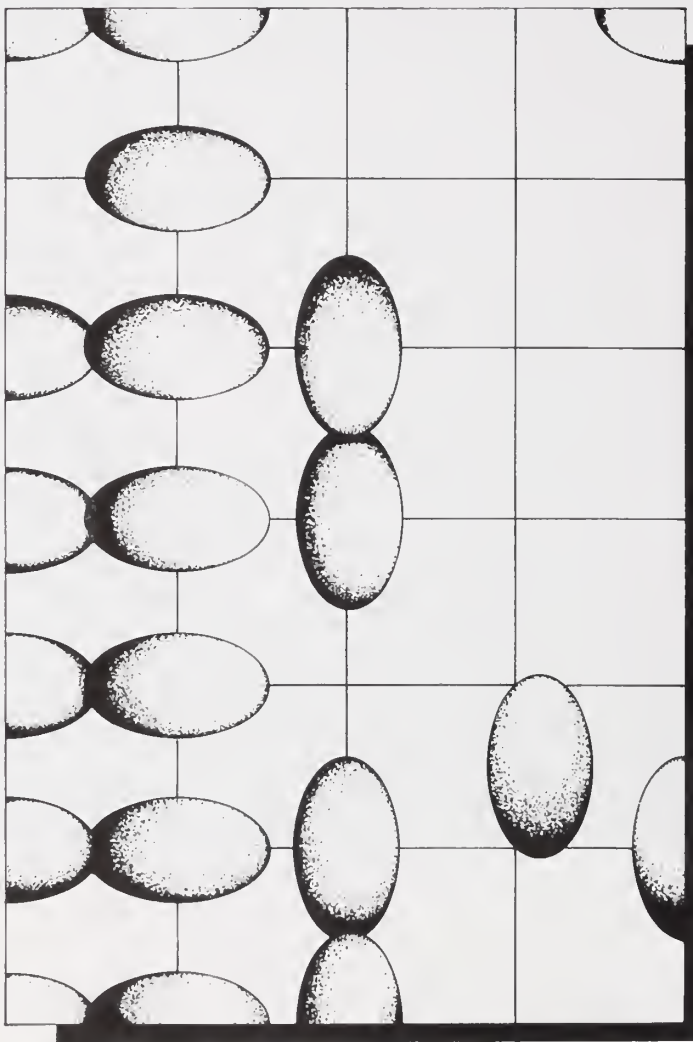
Harvy Douglas stood beside his battered Chevy pickup at the edge of a dead-end logging road, holding, with more love than he had ever known, a new Smith & Wesson .357 Magnum. He gazed on the blue steel and the wood grain as one might revel over a treasured talisman, with reverence and adulation.

Ever so slowly, Harv allowed his right hand the honor of grasping the contoured mahogany grip for the first time since the weapon had crossed the counter of Wally's Guns and Ammo. He lifted the gun from its velvet-lined case, extended his arm, and raised the Magnum to eye level. Closing his left eye, Harvy peered over the vented barrel, sighting trees, cans, and bottles. The weight of the pistol made his hand tremble with anticipation. If he felt this way just holding the empty pistol, he couldn't imagine how actually firing it would make him feel.

With a lightness of touch that his wife would never know, Harvy's index finger sought and found the Magnum's trigger. A suspicious-looking Budweiser can appeared in front of the pistol's sights thirty feet away. Carefully, Harv took aim and squeezed the trigger.

"Take this, you bastard."

The hammer rose and slammed forward...



Pen and ink by Allen M. Ford

click!...

"That's one heck of a gun," said Wally, setting the open pistol case on the store's glass counter. The Magnum glistened under a beam of morning sunshine that was passing through the barred window of the gun shop. "Your old lady know about it?"

"Hell, no. She's still bitching at me for buying that pickup," replied Harvy as he admired his purchase. "Buying three hundred dollars' worth of pistol is really gonna tighten her jaws."

Wally smiled and stroked his chin. With the money safely tucked away in his cash register he could afford to poke a little fun at his buddy. "You got any idea how you'll tell her about it?"

"I'm gonna tell her the truth," said Harvy, straight-faced.

"How's that?"

A slow grin spread across Harv's face. "I'll tell her I bought it to protect her from burglars. I sure wouldn't want to see my little lady get messed over by some crook, would I?"

"Sounds like a line of bullshit to me," chuckled Wally.

"The truth. Bullshit. What's the difference as long as every-

body's happy all the way around?"

"Not a bit as far as I'm concerned. But if a crook does try something, you can put a hole in him big enough to drive a car through." Wally tugged a rag from his back pocket and began wiping fingerprints from the counter's top. "You think you're going to need anything else? Like maybe some bullets?"

"That might not be a bad idea," agreed Harv. "I was planning on getting in some target practice before going home."

Wally set two boxes of Hi-Power shells on the counter and rang up the cost. "That's

By R. Mark Rachal

twenty-two, fifty-three. You heading any place in particular to shoot?"

"I thought I'd go out to Newton's Ridge. There's bound to be something out there to put some holes in." He paid for the cartridges and slipped the boxes into a pocket of his baggy field jacket. "Take it easy, Wally," said Harv as he left the counter and started for the exit.

"I'll take it any way I can get it," laughed Wally. He watched his old buddy leave his store for the last time.

...Click!

Harvy lowered the gun, feeling elated. He pulled out one of the boxes of shells and dumped the bullets into an empty pocket; then, he released the Magnum's cylinder lock. The empty chambers whistled as the afternoon breeze swept through their openings.

Nervous with anticipation, Harv slipped a bullet from his pocket. A trickle of spittle oozed, unnoticed, from the corner of his lips as he gently eased the cartridge into the chamber. With the first shell safely in place, the rest followed in quick succession.

The pistol was loaded.

Harvy gently snapped the cylinder into place. Holding the gun with both trembling hands, he returned his attention to the Bud bottle. He brought the gun up slowly to eye level, found the bottle over the sights, and squeezed the trigger...BANG!!

The report reverberated through the forest like nearby thunder. Birds flew from the limbs of trees, scattering with the waning echoes.

The lead missile spit bark off a tree. The bottle glittered, unscratched.

The miss did not peeve Harvy. He stroked the gun barrel and smiled, "Virgin no more," then aimed again.

He fired and missed twice more. By the fourth shot he had gained enough feel for the weapon to shatter the target. Harv laughed with glee and sent the last two rounds into the air in celebration.

For the next half hour Harvy practiced from the side of the truck. Holed cans and shattered bottles lay as evidence of his improved aim. When he finally decided to give his hand a rest, the barrel of the Magnum was uncomfortably warm.

Harv thought about walking to the Ridge as he reloaded the gun. The granite outcropping was only a half-mile away as the crow flies, and a bee-line through the woods would bring him there within twenty minutes. Figuring that the stroll would give the gun time to cool down, Harv tucked the pistol in his belt and set off.

The forest was dark beneath the umbrella of oak and maple. Returning birds fluttered overhead. Crickets chirruped in anticipation of the coming evening. The dimness and nocturnal sounds made Harvy feel jumpy; they reminded him of how small he really was. And Harvy didn't like to feel small. Unconsciously, his hand found the butt of the revolver.

A bush two dozen yards to his left rustled suddenly. A startled yelp escaped Harv's throat before he had time to think.

From beneath the bush, a squirrel crept out curiously to see what the commotion was about.

Harvy drew his pistol, aimed, and fired. When he looked

again, there was little left to see. Dripping squirrel bits hung from the bush like bloody Christmas ornaments. Stepping closer, Harvy could see the disembodied head under the lower branches staring at him with blank, accusing eyes.

"Gotcha, sucker," Harv chuckled and began walking again. He kept the gun in his hands.

Ten minutes later Harv could make out the defaced granite surface of Newton's Ridge between the breaks in the trees. As if by a stroke of fate, the Ridge had become the canvas of every would-be artist of the local high school. Every new school year brought with it a new layer of multi-colored graffiti.

## SR. 82 Tommy Loves Susan Peachmont High Sucks

Amused, Harvy scanned the fresh slogans as he left the murk of the forest. The sunny clearing that he entered was sparse of grass and overgrown with litter due mainly to decades of weekend parties. A proud smile flickered across Harv's lips with the knowledge that he had done his part in filling the landscape with cellophane, aluminum, and glass.

Harvy set the gun on a flat stone and began rummaging in the scattered debris for suitable targets. Before long, he had piled over twenty sixteen-ounce cans and as many quart bottles into a sizeable heap.

Harvy looked at the pistol. "Ready for some more action?"

The Magnum remained mute.

"All right." He lifted six bottles and walked to a chest-high mass of granite and arranged the bottles into a neat row. As he stood back to admire his handiwork, he thought he heard something scratching at the nearby stones. He looked around, saw nothing, and shrugging, returned to the silent weapon.

Harv lifted the gun, checked and changed the loads, and steadied his nerves for what lay ahead. When he brought the pistol to bear on the first bottle, the scratching that he had heard before clawed for his attention. This time Harvy didn't let the sound go unnoticed.

As quietly as his clumsy work-boots would allow, Harvy circled several granite slabs until he found what he had been seeking. In a corner formed by a pair of large, flat-faced boulders was a cat. The miserable brown animal was scratching at the stone corner, half-mad with starvation.

Harvy thought: "A flea would be hard pressed to suck a decent meal outta you, you scrawny bastard."

A stone crunched under Harv's foot and the cat turned. For a second, it looked hopeful; its saucer-sized eyes gazed at him pitifully. Then, it bared its teeth and spat.

"Well, the same to you, cat. And more of it." Harv raised the pistol and snapped off a quick shot. BANG...zing-zing-zing.

Harvy felt an invisible hand shove him backwards two steps. The Magnum suddenly became heavy in his hand. He allowed it to slip to the ground. Stupefied, Harv looked down and saw a bright stream of crimson cascading down the front of his field jacket.

A sick feeling of disbelief swept through Harv as he realized that he had caught his own ricochet. With a gasp he slumped forward and uttered his last words: "Son of a bit..."

As Harvy Douglas collapsed in a bewildered heap, his fading vision found the cat...pressing toward him with a look of POWER in its eyes.





*Flags, black and white photograph by Renée Hughes*

**Mid-Summer**

Lights begin to dim  
 Symphony stilled; fireworks cease  
 Love Retires the Stage.

*Kellie Gandy*

**old men in clown suits**

Old men in clown suits  
 flinch  
     as the conversation strikes  
 and add another layer of "plain joe"  
 to their collections.

ferris-wheel smiles  
     and bright, colored packages  
 can't hide years  
 of "step this way ...anyone!"

Surveying each other  
     from personal vantage points  
 each listens for the cue  
 to toss his nickel on the pile.

Mother was right--  
 cotton candy can't cure everything

Another day dawns  
     and it is fair.

*Susan Fortenberry*

**Indigo**

Indigo.  
 Beautiful Greek  
 the Stars are his Limit.  
 To fly! To fly.

*Ben Bryant*

**Tired**

Tired of school  
 Tired of work  
 I think I've had enough.  
 Playing the fool  
 Acting the jerk  
 I'm really not so tough.

*William Allan Barnes*

**My Poetry**

My poetry sits rancid  
 in the evening's pale shadows  
 not intending to impress or inspire  
 It sits alone  
 waiting for the gallant rescuer  
 whose head shall never be raised

My poetry sits idle  
 in a rocking chair  
 upon a fog-bound porch  
 It searches endlessly for someone  
 who shall never return

My poetry fades and withers  
 the stale words grow weathered  
 and meaningless  
 as the season and black coffee turn cold

*Leslie Gregory*

**Louisiana Morning**

Cry a thousand shrill songs  
 to the maker of bayous  
 where egrets sun themselves  
 on December mornings,  
 white against dappled  
 earth and river and sky.

A shrimp boat  
 holds its breath  
 and glides by.

*Shari Miller*

**Black**

Black are the wheels that roll on a car,  
     bringing me near and taking me far.  
 Black is the sky when the time is night;  
     black is the opposite color of white.  
 Black are the slaves that were much in demand,  
     fighting so hard to stay on their land.  
 Black is the soil that I do so love;  
     black are the clouds when a storm is above.  
 Black is the evil you hear when one lies;  
     black is the color you see when one dies.  
 Black are the eyes that are filled deep with sorrow;  
     black is the fist that is strong and has power.  
 Black are the bars when you're put in a cell;  
     black is the sinner's path leading to hell.  
 Black is the mind when you find you can't cope;  
     black is the feeling when you have no hope.

Thinking and feeling black now in my time,  
 Black is the color that shapes my design.

*Kim Johnson*

I'm eating soup.  
 It's green  
 It stands waiting in the afternoon,  
 like cream of sadness.

*Ben Bryant*

A warm wave of rain splashed down  
 upon us, and wet the bond of hands.  
 walking figure, two, a day.  
 The sun cries, dear boy,  
 so give me your firm waist;  
 black hair curls,  
 and dreams course  
 side by side.

*Ben Bryant*





### Seeing Clearly

Take away the feathers;  
     take away the lace.  
 Remove the Vanderbilt jeans;  
     Subtract the smell of Chanel;  
 Strip off the Ultra-Lash;  
     Leave behind the Maybelline.  
 Underneath this stockpile of products  
     is me,  
     staring into the bathroom mirror.

*Susan Dollar*

### Celebrate

When there is a victory  
 There is always a celebration.  
 In our lives  
 We have victory  
 But the celebration is long  
 Overdue.

*Renae Quick*

### Standards

She was wearing diamonds:  
 diamonds on her ears, her hair,  
 fingers, wrists, a rope  
 of fire around her neck.

Some might note her face or conversation,  
 but all would calculate her worth.

*Carol Wells*

## The Grass Ring

Edna's momma was a pretty woman, and she ran off with some smiling young Lancelot just before the Great Depression of 1929. She took Walter Junior, Edna's oldest brother, with her. Edna was almost nine years old, and she knew that not only was she disfavored, but she was abandoned as well.

She sat in the swing on the front porch of the small frame house, so similar to the other houses in the sawmill village, and watched her father rocking in a hide-bottomed chair, staring across the street at the silent sawmill. He had been laid off a week ago when the mill had shut down.

"You're the oldest now, Edna, of the six children," Walter said slowly. "You'd better try your hand at cooking." His eyes never left the mill as he spoke.

Edna knew that well enough—she'd been considering that he would expect her to take care of them. "Yes, sir," she replied, sliding out of the swing. "I could fix those collard greens."

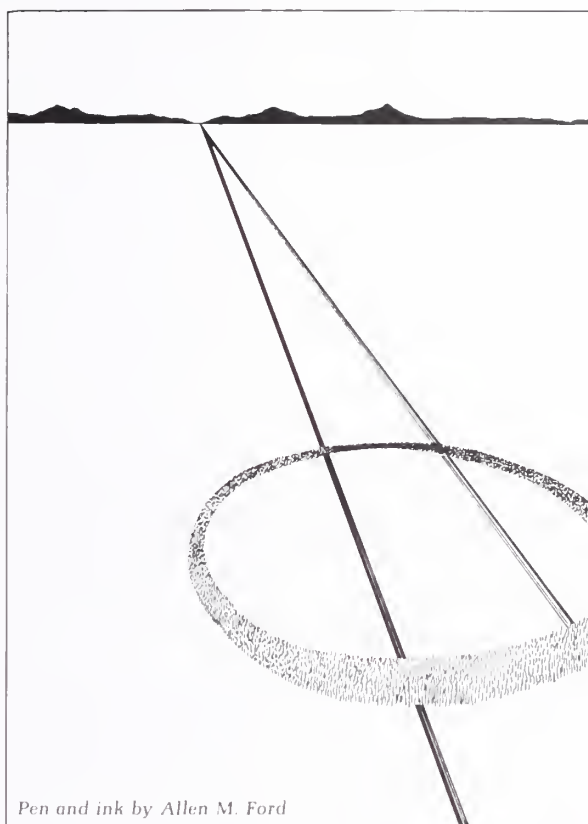
"Fine." He nodded toward the next house, "I fixed a hole in the back step for Miss Vergie. She has a piece of salt pork for you."

Edna went over to get it, wondering how many more chores Miss Vergie would have for Walter. Her husband was laid off, too, but she had a job at the church orphanage, and her children were all grown.

After a few days spent staring at the mill, Walter decided to leave north Louisiana and to seek farm work in southern Mississippi. He said he would send for the children as soon as he had the money. In the meantime, Miss Vergie and some other ladies from the church came and piled the children in a car and drove them to the orphanage.

Edna's small, thin body shook with outrage, her long dark hair falling into sturdy hazel eyes that told the church ladies she was in charge. She never spoke though. Her lips were drawn and her arms tightly folded across her chest on the drive to the orphanage.

The orphanage was neither good nor bad; rather it was interminable as Edna waited for her father's summons, which she was certain would come.



Pen and ink by Allen M. Ford

And she was content to let the church ladies care for her brothers and sisters. Edna rested and waited for her turn. When the letter came two months later with the money for the trip to Mississippi, Edna ran and played and called out teasing names with the other children for the first time, while Miss Vergie and her husband packed a car and made arrangements for the long drive.

"I'm glad to leave these old shadowy woods," Edna said of the tall, enclosing pine forests as she stepped into the car.

On the cramped journey she gathered the children to her; she held two-year-old Baby Arthur in her lap and silenced the others with a "Hush, now..." or a jab from her sharp elbow. The children looked at her quietly and gradually nestled around her, falling asleep with their arms across her leg or their cheeks pressed against her shoulder.

Edna sat still and straight in the dark back seat, determined not to sleep, but slowly her head fell back as the car jumbled through the night. At dawn, Mississippi spread out before Edna. It seemed to her like a painted fan with pleated green hills and flocked white cotton under a wide hot sky. She smiled her approval as she tried to smooth down the children's hair with a little spit and the hard pressure of her palms.

Her father stood waiting for them on the doorstep of the shack. He tousled the children's heads gently with his heavy awkward hands; then the younger ones ran into the dirt yard to play. Edna stood near her father, glad when Miss Vergie and her husband finally left. She wanted to hold his hand, but his absent gaze returned to the fields of cotton. It seemed he was hardly aware that they had arrived. She found a straw broom and swept out the three rooms of the shack, and she set the children to gathering up the few sticks scattered in the bare yard so she could sweep it clear, too.

Walter called them together just after dusk. "There's plenty of work here for sharecroppers," he said, "but farming is different from the way things were when I worked at the sawmill." He paused,

By Susan Long Haga

then went on determinedly, "You children will have to go into the fields with me tomorrow and work hard at picking as much cotton as you can."

He searched their faces for some reaction, but they only seemed puzzled. Edna turned her head away from him when he started to say some lighthearted words of encouragement, so Walter shrugged and put them to bed in one bedroom, the three boys in one large bed, the girls in another. Later Walter joined the boys, after lifting out Baby Arthur and placing him beside Edna.

She held the child tightly, not minding the wetness, and breathed his sweet breath. She would work hard, she thought; they all would. "We won't always be sharecroppers," she promised bitterly to the small boy in her arms.

Edna woke in the dark before dawn and whispered, "Mamma." She did that every morning now, looking out the window to see if a car was driving up, if her mother was returning to claim Edna, to exchange her for Walter Junior. It was cool and still outside—the scent of honeysuckle mingling with that of fresh-mown hay on the slight breeze. Her bare feet padded lightly on the rough wood floor as she went into the kitchen, where she lit an oil lamp and set it on the table. She pulled a lard bucket out of the cabinet and stood on it to make biscuits, her small hands shifting and patting the dough with quick, deft movements.

"Cathead biscuits and sawmill gravy are mighty good," Walter said when they were all seated around the table. Edna smiled back at him.

"I like to cook," she said. "I'll try a cake next."

The children were pleased at that. They eagerly took up their cotton sacks and followed Walter into the fields. Edna carried Baby Arthur with her and watched him play near the edge of the field as she learned the pain of picking cotton.

She straightened her back at noon and carried him asleep back to the shack. She hadn't known that so many muscles could hurt at once; some of the other children sat crying in the kitchen as she fried cornmeal patties. They ate in silence and grimly went back to the fields, where they spent the rest of the summer.

When winter came, Edna and the older children walked three miles into town and attended school. Edna sat at a comfortable desk near the woodstove and practiced her handwriting with steady, rhythmic strokes. The school had been given a set of children's encyclopedia, *The Book of Knowledge*, and she read a volume each month, slowly turning from one impression to the next. The teacher, Miss Loyd, gave Edna some dresses that she had collected. In return, she asked Edna to read aloud to the class each morning from a passage of Edna's choosing.

As Edna read one day from Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," she noticed that Herbert McComb was making faces at her. His father owned the shack that Edna's family lived in and the land that they farmed. She turned her head slightly so she would not see him.

"And moving thro' a mirror clear/That hangs before her all the year,/Shadows of the world appear," she recited to his image in the windowpane as her low voice carried the cadences without pause. She read the poem many times for the class, and knew it wholly by the time she had to leave school and return to the farm for spring planting.

"Edna," Herbert said to her seven years later, "I want us to

get married."

Edna paused on the dark road as they walked home from the revival tent-meeting. She could make out the silhouettes of her five brothers and sisters under the rising moon, running and jumping in the road ahead of them. Herbert and Edna stood before the gates of the Big House, Herbert's house. She turned her sixteen-year-old bobbed head away from him and looked beyond the gates to the antebellum house where electric lights glittered in its many windows. A fine, thick carpet of grass lay between the front gates and the house. She thought how cool the grass would feel to bare feet on a sticky night like the one that hung on her now, almost as cool and refreshing as the tea-colored river that ran near her shack.

"Edna, I mean to marry you," Herbert said again, and rubbed his hand into her shoulder.

Her newly-turned woman's body shivered as she asked, "Have you spoken to your father yet?"

He took his hand away and stared at the house with her, "I've tried, but he won't listen," he said.

"What does he say?" Edna asked quickly.

"Never. That's all he says." His voice became excited, "But I've got a plan, Edna. We can get married in secret. We won't tell anybody. And then you can sneak out sometimes and we can have each other." His hand was on her dress, running up the length of her thin leg. She was wary of the silky feel of the material on her bare skin. Herbert was insisting now, "Later we'll tell everybody and have a big wedding."

Edna shook loose from his grasp. She turned to face the road to her shack, so that Herbert and his house were just out of her line of vision. "I'd better get on home; my daddy will be watching for me," she said carefully, edging away from him, and then sprinting. "Just leave me alone, Herbert," she called back, never breaking her stride.

She ran for a hundred yards and then stopped, panting, crying, burning where he had touched her leg. Edna touched the spot herself in amazement. Now she knew what her mother had wanted, and she feared the spell it could weave.

Edna was finished with school; her father told her that an eighth-grade education would be enough for anyone. A long summer in the cotton fields stretched before her, the wide fields that had kept her out of school part of every term and prevented her from graduating on time.

In the dirt yard a narrow band of grass grew in a circle beside the shack. Evenings, Edna hauled water from the river and weeded the small ring, encouraging it to thrive and spread out over the yard. The grass never did flourish; however it did provide a place for the family to pose whenever a relative or photographer came along with a camera. Every picture taken showed them standing in the dirt surrounded by the grass ring with three strands of barbed wire behind them, and the open sky beyond that.

Herbert McComb rode with his father in the truck at Christmas time to give each of his tenants a bucket of syrup and a sack of hog guts, feet, and head pieces. Edna came out of the shack and stood near the tailgate.

"Merry Christmas, Edna," Mr. McComb said, handing her a syrup bucket.

"Merry Christmas, Mr. McComb," she replied.



Herbert was kneeling in the truck; his eyes caught Edna's gaze and held it. He reached into the tub of meat and pulled out a ham roast, then dropped it in a sack and covertly handed it to her; his father had already gotten back into the cab of the truck.

"Merry Christmas, Edna, and to your family," he said.

"Thank you, Herbert," she said evenly and hurried back into the shack.

On Christmas morning, an apple, an orange, and a few walnuts waited for each child in a stretched sock. Edna's momma came home that day, with an armful of presents and an excited flush on her cheeks. Martha didn't drive up in a car, as Edna had so often imagined; she had gotten a ride to the nearest paved road and walked to the shack and knocked on the door just as they were sitting down for dinner. Martha wore a cream dress with small black squares on it. "Oh, yes, it is a lovely dress," she said. "But not very practical or warm," she added and laughed as she took off her coat.

Edna watched Walter's face as he carefully composed a smile, as if a neighbor had dropped by. He would hold his conflicting emotions in silence until the children were in bed. To Edna, Martha seemed like a great light burning with words as she sat at the table and talked and ate with them. Edna sat next to her and felt the fever of her momma's agitated gestures and smiles.

Edna's oldest brother had died last winter from tuberculosis, Martha said. She didn't mention the man she had left with. She had lived in big cities, she said, and seen and done everything. Walter and the children listened to the years of Martha's life, and absorbed them and her. She was still pretty, but the hollows under her cheekbones were deeper. They finished eating, and Martha looked from one face to another. "My, but I'm cold," she said, rubbing her arms.

Edna quickly brought her a shawl. She tucked it around the frayed collar of Martha's dress. Edna stood behind her mother and pulled the short waves of her black hair loose from the collar and shawl. The hair was soft and thick; Edna held it in her hands for a moment before she dropped it and sat back down at the table.

Later they opened the presents she had brought. Martha was very shy and very gay at the same moment, as she tried to hold back from the children in their joy, but finally rushed forward to take them in her arms and squeeze and kiss them, her laughter floating around the room in little circles.

Martha put the children to bed that night and kissed their foreheads. Edna lay in bed and listened to the murmur of Walter's and Martha's voices as they sat before the fire and talked, with Martha smoking and the strange smell of tobacco in the house. Edna slept soundly and woke without waiting for the crunch of car tires. An unusual sound and smell roused her. She walked into the kitchen where Martha was cooking ham and eggs and biscuits and gravy. She smiled at Edna, who sat at the table and watched her momma cook. Martha gave her a cup of coffee—it was richer than Edna's coffee. The biscuits were lighter and of a more uniform shape.

Martha was going to stay. She was so sorry. No one was sorer than she. She set about making restitution; she moved everything outside and mopped down the shack, mended old clothes, sewed new ones, cut out paper dolls, and built stick forts. Her energy lasted only half a day, and

by afternoon she was reduced to sitting near the fire, overcome with coughing fits. However, the next morning she gamely started anew.

The next Sunday Martha and Edna were alone in the kitchen; the rest of the family had gone to church, and Martha was pinning a new dress on her. Edna watched her mother as she busied around the hem; Martha had taken a special interest in Edna's appearance, rolling her hair and applying a little makeup.

"Why did you come back?" Edna voiced the question that had been worrying her for days.

Martha looked up at her from her kneeling position on the floor. "I wonder you don't ask why I left," she answered softly.

Edna got down from the chair, "I know why you left," she said, staring into Martha's grey eyes. "You wanted to live a life, not just watch dreams reflected in a mirror," Edna said and reached out to touch Martha's arm. "I want to live, too."

Martha turned away from her to look out the window; she whispered, "Not the way I did. It's like walking out on an iced-over river, and the ice won't hold; it cracks. I drowned, again and again." She whirled around and grabbed Edna, holding her fiercely. "I don't want that for you. I want you to walk away, holding your own." She kissed Edna's cheek and then pushed her away, saying, "Get out of that dress so I can hem it."

Edna removed the dress and handed it to her. "I wanted to get some grass in, this spring," Edna told her. "There's a little patch in the yard already."

"I'll get some seed. If anybody can start grass here, it's me. I've got a green thumb," Martha said and laughed, her voice full of promise.

Edna was impassioned with the many new possibilities that occurred to her. She could visit with her aunt in New Orleans, or begin a nursing course, or finish high school. Martha encouraged her, and freedom was the gift that she offered. For two weeks the world glowed and beckoned to Edna. Then Martha's bursts of strength dwindled to an hour a day, and then to nothing. She was placed on a cot near the fireplace, and the doctor was sent for.

He said to take care of her, keep her warm, and feed her broth. She had pneumonia; she might recover. Edna resumed her position as workhorse for the large family and added Martha's care to her daily regime. When she became too tired and strained, she would slap her sisters' faces. Their cries were the same whether they were being slapped or asked to work.

Martha died in late February. Edna helped lay her out on a board in the front room. When relatives and neighbors started to fill the room, Edna went outside to breathe less crowded air. She examined the grass ring she had tended last summer. It was no larger now than then, only brown and dry from freezing over.

From inside the shack came the voice of a neighbor woman saying, "She has a lovely face."

"God in his mercy lend her grace," Edna said and took a match from her apron pocket, striking it and setting the grass ring on fire. She watched it blaze and smoke and die down to a smoldering blackness.

She would know in the spring if the grass would grow back. And then, she thought, gazing down the row of bare trees alongside the dirt road, then she would find a way to take the road, rather than the river.



**Swimming**

Black floaters,  
 Splashers, swimmers  
 And dog paddlers.

Where?

In the corporate pool.

Black managers,  
 Wheelers, dealers,  
 Action achievers.

Where?

In the corporate world.

Black life,  
 Culture shock,  
 Social conflict.

Where?

In the corporate society.

Troubled, turbulent waters,  
 Wading, floating,  
 Splashing, and doggy stroking.

Where?

Swimming in the mainstream  
 of modern corporate America.

*Amanda Young*

**Rota**

The rota goes 'round and 'round;  
 Leaves are borne and then scatter in the wind.  
 This year, lake bed's dry;  
 Last year, someone drowned.  
 The gyre spins without end.  
 Man's struggle to be free of the spiral  
 remains his thorny crown.

*Susan Dollar*

**Change**

change,  
 in his sunglasses  
     glinting into the gray.  
 smiles  
     of leather gloves,  
 of puckered vermouth lips,  
 and grannyglasses shattering blue  
     you.

*Ben Bryant*

**Autumn Day**

chirping like a bird,  
with earnest, anxious imperatives,  
you surround my friend with love  
and smiling, I trudge on.

*Ben Bryant*



*Dead Pumpkin, Broken Glass. black and white photograph by Debra Clapper*



*Untitled black and white photograph by Renee Richard*



*Untitled black and white photograph by Tim Dyer*

### Another Time, Another Age

Through a foggy mist I see us  
 In another time, another age  
 We sit embraced on the porch  
 Of a cabin from long ago.  
 It is Louisiana in the early fall  
 Late shadows of the evening  
 Cause the sky to look deeper blue  
 As we watch the mist through the cedars  
 by the old picket gate.  
 I see an old hound stretched out under the steps  
 Dreaming of a younger day  
 Hens scratch in the weeds beyond the fence  
 A cowbell tinkles in the evening stillness  
 I know she's coming home for the night.  
 Smells of fresh-baked bread and bacon frying  
 Float out on the evening air  
 The wind stirs and leaves fall on the  
 old tin roof over us.  
 You hold me closer in the damp, cool air  
 I lean my head on your shoulder and snuggle closer  
 You are there, sheltering me from the world  
 Living life's dreams with me  
 In another time, another age.

*Jo D. Honeycutt*

### Tokens

Like evening mist,  
 memories haunt my mind.  
 Two days were not enough  
 to bridge empty nothingness.

Now you've gone, left behind  
 a half-constructed bridge  
 half-demolished walls,  
 a silent, pervading,  
 vapor-like memory.

Tokens only accentuate emptiness.

Would I have been happier  
 with former numbness which  
 acknowledged not the void?

Should I

Thank you  
 for building half a bridge?  
 Curse you  
 for shattering a safe lonely sanctuary?

...self-induced anesthesia grows  
 ineffective...once impenetrable  
 walls become weak...the fortress trembles  
 unable to truly live or die.

Friend, pray  
 that I may awaken to love or retreat  
 to numbness.

Hell is feeling bits of nothing...  
 pieces of something  
 being trapped inbetween.

*Caroline Lee*



**When Eternity Comes to Now**

Time was when Christmas brought me  
Visions of a god-man lying helpless  
Manchild in a slum in old Judea  
A redeemer, just like us  
By some special transformation  
And the heavens all in chaos at the scene.

Now I see the meaning  
In the subterfuge we've cherished  
And I sadden at the thought of those  
Who still linger at the manger  
For the message that it carries  
Is far greater than the glitter  
And the angels which are hidden in their boxes  
Once the music and the glamour go away.

No choruses were singing  
Nor need they even now  
Eternity is born new every day  
When a child of man touches the spirit  
Of one like unto himself  
A little greater and  
A little less than god.

*Carleen Boudreaux*



*Untitled black and white photograph by Peyton Cunningham*

**Winter**

White snow shrouds  
     tombs of those long dead  
 That lie in earthen graves  
     and shiver with the cold--  
 They have no flesh to keep  
     them warm.  
 These are heroes of days gone by--  
 Where is their grandeur now?

*Caroline Lee*

**Nothing Comes from Being Alone**

What would you call lucky?  
 I used to call it five nights  
 out of seven.  
 Now, it's two nights out of thirty.  
 My, how times do change!  
 Used to be you couldn't wait to get home to me.  
 Now, it's have to make a buck, have to find a way,  
 Have to keep you in your style.

Maybe it's just easier to be gone.  
 Maybe other people don't ask questions...  
 if it's a job.  
 I do.  
 We made it before there was the adulation  
 of the audiences.  
 Or...do you really prefer their applause to mine?

*Kathleen Smith*

**Battle**

Flying across the desert sands  
 A Bedouin sheik rides to his tents.  
 He gives a warning as he arrives;  
 Forty Bedouins spring to their mares' backs.  
 They float in a body to meet their enemy.  
 Using both hands to fight,  
 Trusting their mares with their lives.

*Lee Anne Shackelford*



*Man of Work, pen and ink by William Allan Barnes*

**A Lyric  
(I want to write)**

Some sweeping, swirling stanzas singing  
Wistful, waltzing words with  
Ringing, rich, romantic rhymes  
Of sweetly sentimental sounds  
In light and lilting lyric lines  
For fluid, floating feelings full of  
Circling, swaying, sighing, smiling  
Senseless sensuousness.

*Corliss McCallister*

**Like We Are**

I went where the violets grow today,  
Wanting to find nestled softly against  
the damp earth -- Flowers.  
Spring blue against winter brown.  
Full-blown, joyous. Like we once were.

But huddled under dank decaying leaves,  
I found only buds. Whitely, tightly  
Wrapped against the chill air. Like we are.  
I left them there.  
Walked away on dead, crackly leaves.  
Leaves finished and dead. Like we are.

*Debra Waters Clapper*

# FALL CONTEST THIRD PLACE ESSAY

## Pinecrest

As we rode to Pinecrest State School for mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and physically handicapped children, anxiety overwhelmed me. This was the first time that I would actually get my own idea of what these children were like. I had heard many bizarre ideas concerning the way these children behaved; however, I refused to believe them; I wanted to withhold my opinion until I saw for myself.

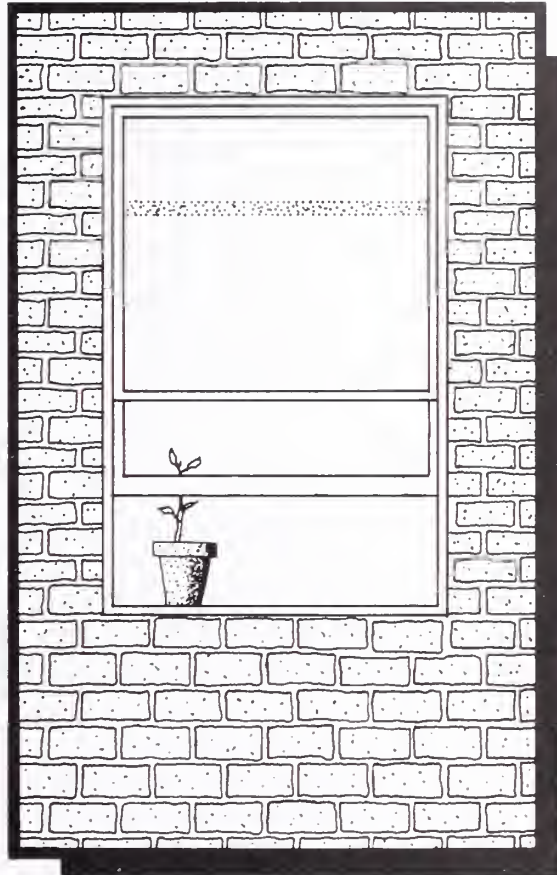
As we approached Pinecrest, I began to have mixed feelings and signs of nervousness appeared. I looked cautiously everywhere I went, as though I were going to be mugged at anytime. When we entered the supervisor's office, he told us immediately that we would be divided into groups of two. Bryan (my partner) and I started our tour. This was Bryan's first visit also.

I was a little frightened after recalling stories that I had heard about conditions in mental schools. People had told me that the residents would pull a person into a room and beat him (or her) up.

One patient we observed was very peculiar. Her name was Loretta. Loretta acted as though we had never entered the room. She was in her own world, knowing and caring little of what existed around her. We were told by her instructor that the only time she showed any response was when she craved a cigarette.

When I looked at Loretta, her face a blank stare, I was provoked to ask questions: What problem is so great that it has made us unable to communicate with you? What is going on in your mind? Why are you blocking us out? If only she could be reached she might have a chance to lead a halfway normal life. I felt sorry and confused as we proceeded to the next room.

Unlike Loretta, Liz (another resident) was violent and hostile. Self-destructive was the term they used to describe her behavior. This was the first time I had ever seen or heard of someone who was self-destructive. I was frightened by her facial appearance. Her face was covered by ugly scars. She had picked holes in her face with her fingernails.



Untitled pen and ink by Allen M. Ford

We were told afterwards that she did not feel any pain. In order for Liz to stop being destructive to herself, mittens were placed on her hands. Sometimes Liz would fight the other residents. She would then be placed in a straight-jacket and isolated from everyone. Liz and Loretta were classified as emotionally disturbed.

Although the first two residents were deeply disturbed, I found great pleasure in the next person we observed. His name was John. John had been diagnosed as having Down's Syndrome (a mental retardation disorder). Children with Down's Syndrome have the following physical characteristics: thick epicanthal folds in the corners of their eyes (making their eyes appear to slant upward slightly), a protruding tongue, a flat face, malformed feet and hands, and short stature. There has been a myth that children with Down's Syndrome (mongoloidism) are usually

happy and lovable. I don't know if this is true of all the children with Down's Syndrome, but it is true of John.

I was deeply affected by John. The words that came out of his mouth meant very much to me. This was the first time that any child had ever come to me and said, "Look, Lady. Look what I done." He wanted me to see that he could write his name. After I smiled and showed my approval, he hugged me. This was the greatest thing I had ever experienced.

John gave me something that I will never forget. He made me feel as though I were loved to the fullest. I only listened to John, but he gave me so much more in return. It was indeed a pleasure to meet John, and I am grateful to him for the wonderful experience he gave me.

Retarded, emotionally disturbed, and physically handicapped children should be given a chance to develop their potential. Many people say that they do not have the patience for these children; however, I believe that they do not realize that with a little time and a lot of love, these children might be able to lead normal or halfway normal lives. Nor do I think they realize how great the reward is in knowing that what had been thought of as the impossible has been accomplished.

By Suzette Victorian



### Juan Jung Mann's Proposal

If treetops could caress  
     me, roll me bare-skinned, toss  
     me nymph-play -- Elm to Cypress, flip  
     and air-dance, slide  
     past sticky-fingered Sweet Gum...

And then a cloud named Nimbo Stratus whip  
     dark arms around my waist  
     and sling me solid Zeus-like passion  
     so I would glide for days and days  
     to settle in a Cumulous Island, suck  
     ambrosia-Fudgesicle teats,

I know I'd then be happy, let's  
     now bargain with our wishes  
 While here, I'll be a model human being:  
     a perfect, giving daddy, ever-loving to the missus  
     --I'll even get a job as good as she has.

Make fact then of my fiction  
     I'll wash my car and oil my diction, pay  
     my bills before they're due.

It really all depends on You.

Lee Anne Moore

### barely under standing

alone I found the tilled, rich sod  
     and silent slid my feet into its sun-  
     warmth. watched it rise between my naked toes  
     and saw you simply standing, shoes untied,  
     with tidy sacks of tiny seeds.

I urged you shed your shoes  
     you did  
 You urged me plant the seeds  
     I did  
 we feel just flowers at our ankles  
     and wind enough to know the whole plant  
 we feel  
     the skin-thin petals bruise themselves against the bone  
 we feel  
     the papered leaves rub edge against the flesh  
 we feel  
     the smooth, resilient stem move back small hairs  
     our toe-tips touch web roots  
 but do we feel those, too?  
     or did we?  
 I see you've picked them all and gone.  
 I'm shoeless in empty soil  
     with sorrow tears for loss  
     appreciation of my gain.

Lee Anne Moore

**here lies ivan**

a funny man  
with dirty shirts  
and a runny nose

a naughty man  
who slept in a house of trash  
and kept hidden hundred dollar bills

ivan,  
ivan the terrible  
you were the dust and grease from old engines  
the scrooge of our town  
a man of sorrows  
acquainted with no one  
but cats and their litters

did you know we peered into your windows?  
laughed behind your bushes?  
you said you planted potatoes that talked,  
kissed baby onions that cried

and we couldn't understand  
why you never bought a car  
or a new roof for your head

why the whistles  
you sent out on silent nights  
made our skins chill.

*Shari Miller*

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## FALL CONTEST THIRD PLACE POETRY

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### Oh, God! Change the Channel!

#### I. A Delaying Action

The parish Audubon Society  
 discusses ecological concerns.  
 The members write their congressmen about  
 free-flowing rivers, backpack trails, and air;  
 arouse the public to defeat the Corps  
 of Engineers' Kisatchie Reservoir;  
 count birds whose fast metabolism serves  
 to show minute environmental change;  
 resist the chemical pollution and  
 depletion of our natural aquifers;  
 protest extinction of our predators.

#### II. Ending

Now, this is Autumn, too:  
 The red sun boils the sucked-down seas;  
 through hazy dust the fields yield straw,  
 and tinder branches fall from trees.

The last emaciated men,  
 who probe for meat on fleshless swine,  
 await winter.

#### III. Rejoice!

to reign a thousand years Mount Zion whore of Ba-  
 bylon the number of the beast millenium  
 the tribulation Armageddon seven gold-  
 en candlesticks death resurrection seventh seal

*O Lord, deal not with us according to our sins,  
 Neither reward us according to our iniquities.<sup>1</sup>*

am Alpha and Omega morning star behold  
 salvation presence of the Lamb the wrath of God  
 pale horse shall wipe away all tears repent  
 apocalypse a voice that sounded like a trumpet call

*O Lord, show thy mercy upon us  
 And grant us thy salvation.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Book of Common Prayer, 1928, p. 58

<sup>2</sup> Book of Common Prayer, 1928, p. 31

## Wedding Bell Blues

Many people believe that life begins at seventeen for the simple reason that prior to that time you are still a young girl or boy, and the community expects you to act accordingly. Then at seventeen the robes of womanhood or manhood are thrust around your shoulders whether you like it or not. Certain questions arise that only you can answer. You may ask yourself, "What do I owe my country, city, church, school, or home?" Another question to ask is what do you want out of life? Meanwhile all the relatives are asking that big question, "And when are you getting married?"

Once I loved to go to weddings. Beautiful people were everywhere and there were always plenty of refreshments. Recently, however, I've reversed my decision. I conducted an informal survey among my friends to get their views on the subject. Two out of the five feel the same way I do and for basically the same reasons.

Take for instance the last wedding I attended. This past May my mother and I went to the wedding of a distant cousin. We stayed at my grandparents' house. My aunt and uncle along with their two children were also there. Not long after we arrived, the torture began.

"When are you getting married?" "Aren't you engaged by now?" "Who is it that you are dating?" One would expect the children to ask these questions in jest, but my grandparents were serious! It was time that I glimpsed the rough road that lay ahead of me.

The wedding itself was quite beautiful and quite boring. As usual there were many attendants for both bride and groom. The bride in her gown was radiant, and the groom in his grey tuxedo was debonair. It was a storybook wedding, and when you've seen one, you've seen them all.

The reception was held in the nearby church hall. Here I had the opportunity to notice that the guests seemed to fall into four major categories: those under seventeen, those over fifty, couples, and singles.

The under-seventeen group enjoyed the



*Untitled black and white photograph by Renée Hughes*

wedding the most in my opinion. While their parents socialized, they ran around the hall terrorizing the other guests. What fun!

Everyone over the age of fifty seemed to congregate on one side of the room. Here they sat eating, drinking, and conversing. A major topic of discussion was the music being played by the band. According to these critics it was too loud and too fast. This was the liveliest group of all.

By far the majority of the guests were in couple form. These people crowded the dance floor for every song. I wondered if they really liked dancing to the music or if they were trying to recapture what they considered the gaiety of youth. In any case, everyone in this group enjoyed themselves, and of that I am sure.

And then there was me. I fell into that subclass somewhere between the couples and the under-seventeens known as the singles. Out of nearly three hundred people, I only counted thirty (including myself) who could have been called single.

We were the ones who stayed near the refreshments, visited with the over-fifty group, and sat passively in chairs lined up against one wall. Well, what do you know, the "swinging singles" are really wallflowers.

As a member of this minority, I was harassed by friends and relatives alike. Aunts, uncles, and young cousins found my lack of involvement a great topic for discussion. Again the questions were asked. "When are you getting married?" "Who are you dating now?" Even my mother's friends, whom I didn't know, participated in the interrogation. What was I to do?

I left before the bride threw her bouquet. I don't think I could have stood the disappointment and discouragement that I would have felt if I had not caught it. Was I just tired, or had a defense mechanism surfaced? I don't know.

Right now you're asking yourself, "If weddings are so awful, why do people (single people) continue to go?" Who knows? So will I go to the next wedding I'm invited to? Of course I will. You never know when the next wedding will be your own.

By Nancy Villemarette



**FALL CONTEST SECOND PLACE POETRY****The Encounter**

On Easter's bright morning  
smelling cleanly of green grass  
and clear sky,  
we children ran  
breathless to creek,  
arms ready for life.

But barely had we reached  
the glinting stream  
when the count of death began:  
one warbler with a broken neck,  
a snake all limp and still.  
A thick hush made music in our throats;  
our boots sank soft in mud.

With shy fingers  
we traced smooth bones,  
with long sticks  
poked tall grass,  
until we fell transfixed upon  
a bull's bleached skull,  
like a devil's mask  
grinning pure obscenity  
in sun.

*Shari Miller*

## CONTRIBUTORS

William Allan Barnes—Allan is a senior broadcasting major from Marrero, La. He is a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity and is a disk jockey at KNOC.

Dr. James Bartholomew—Dr. Bartholomew is Head of the Department of Languages and a prolific poet. His poetry was read at the Poetry in the Loft held last fall.

Carleen Boudreaux—A native of New Orleans, she is a senior radiologic technology major. Carleen is a member of the American Society of Radiological Technologists and the Tri-Beta Biology Club.

Ben Bryant—A freshman from Natchitoches, Ben is an English major, theatre minor, who appeared in *El Grande de Coca-Cola*.

Dr. Bill Bryant—Dr. Bryant is Head of the Department of Art. He has just published *THE ARMADILLO BOOK*.

Mr. Neill Cameron—Mr. Cameron is an Associate Professor of English in the Department of Languages and has written numerous plays and poems.

Debra Waters Clapper—A botany major/English minor, Debra is the assistant editor of *Argus* and the president of Sigma Tau Delta.

Peyton Cunningham—A pre-dentistry major from Natchitoches, he is serving as Chief Justice of the SGA Supreme Court and Director of Student Rights.

André Davis—He is minoring in photography and double majoring in aviation/military science and is from Alexandria.

Janice Denison—A senior social work major, Janice is doing her field work at the Natchitoches Parish Division of Youth Services. She is secretary of the Periaktoi club.

Daphne DeVerger—Daphne, a journalism major/theatre minor, is active in NSU theatre. Her play, which appears in this issue, was produced by the Showcase for New Playwrights this spring.

Ellen Dollar—A freshman from Natchitoches majoring in wildlife management, Ellen is very concerned about the preservation of barrier islands around the Gulf Coast.

Susan Dollar—Susan is a senior French/English education major from Natchitoches. She received the 1982 English Award and is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, Phi Alpha Theta, and Sigma Tau Delta.

Tim Dyer—Tim is a student flight instructor and hopes to combine his interests of flying and photography into a career.

Marjorie Fontenot—A graduate student in business education, she is a certified professional secretary and won the Secretary of the Year Award. She is a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

Allen M. Ford—Allen is a past *Argus* editor and currently is serving as photography and art editor. He is a post-graduate student in photography.

Susan Fortenberry—Susan, a sophomore, is a computer science major from Shreveport. She was editor of "The Chain," is a member of Alpha Lambda Delta, and enjoys doing missionary work in the summer.

Kellie Gandy—A graduate student in history, Kellie has worked as a radio announcer for three years. She is a member of Sigma Delta Chi, the Professional Journalists' Society, and has performed in the Northwestern University Theatre.

Leslie Gregory—A freshman theatre major, Leslie has done graphics for the Natchitoches Folk Festival. She is a member of the American Theatre Association, ASA, and the Anthropology Club.

Susan Long Haga—Susan is the current *Argus* editor and a senior in English. She received the 1983 Sigma Tau Delta Award, two commendations from The American College Theatre Festival for playwrighting, and is a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

Roy Holland—Roy is an alumnus from Winnfield who now lives in Alexandria. He has published poetry in several anthologies.

Dr. Walter C. Holmes—Dr. Holmes, an Associate Professor of Biology, studies tropical flora and has discovered fifty new species of plants. He is writing a Louisiana-French Ethno-Botany book.

Jo D. Honeycutt—A resident of Natchitoches, Jo enjoys writing country-western songs in addition to poetry. Some of her songs are being recorded locally.

Renée Hughes—A photography major at Northwestern, Renee hopes to one day be the official photographer at the Kentucky Derby.

Kim Johnson—Kim is a freshman from Ferriday majoring in journalism/broadcasting. She is active in theatre and likes tennis, hockey, and skating.

Blanche B. Landers—An alumna who now resides in Ingram, Texas, Blanche is a member of the Poetry Society of Texas and the National League of American Pen Women. She has published several poems.

Caroline Lee—Caroline is a senior English major with a minor in mass communications. She is the vice-president of Sigma Tau Delta, works as a DJ at KNWD, and is active in the Baptist Student Union.

Karen McAlister—A recent NSU alumna, Karen is in graduate school at North Texas State University studying music composition.

Corliss McCallister—Corliss, an art education graduate student, is seeking certification in gifted and talented education. She has designed costumes for Mardi Gras.

Shari Miller—A graduate student in English, Shari is a member of Sigma Tau Delta. She has published a book of poetry, short stories, and drama. She is currently working on a book about Louisiana Indian crafts.

Lee Anne Moore—Lee Anne is the literary editor of *Argus*. A senior English major/speech minor, she recently spent a year teaching in Mexico. She is the secretary of Sigma Tau Delta and a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

Eric Maron—Eric, a broadcasting major from Tarzana, California, is the general manager of KNWD. He served in the army at Fort Polk and enjoys writing scripts as well as short stories.

Paul Pickering—Paul is a freshman pre-law major from Natchitoches. He was awarded the Freshman ROTC Leadership Award in 1981 and practices karate.

Renaë Quick—A recent graduate of NSU, Renaë's career is in Mass Communications. Her interests include photography, horses, and Christian service.

R. Mark Rachal—A junior majoring in broadcasting and journalism, he is a graduate of the Ocean Corporation of Deep Sea Diving and served six years in the air force as a fireman.

Renee Richard—Renee is a photography major from Sulphur, La. She is a Lady Demon softball player.

Angela Rome—Angela, a sophomore, is involved in the Presidential Leadership program. She is a member of Sigma Kappa Sorority, the Association of Student Artists, and played the lead in *El Gronde de Coco-Colo*.

Myrna Schexnider—A senior studying speech, theatre, and dance, Myrna is active in theatrical productions as an actress and choreographer. She recently portrayed Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginio Woolf?*

Lee Anne Shakelford—An equine science major from Titusville, Florida, Lee Ann plans to manage a large Arabian horse farm after graduation.

Kathleen Smith—Kathleen has an M.A. in Women's History from the University of Maryland and is a graduate assistant in the Department of Theatre-Speech. This spring NSU Press will publish her book, *Lt. Col. Emily A. Miller, a biography*. She also writes romance novels and plays.

James Townsend—James is a senior history major/English minor from Natchitoches. His is a member of Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honorary society.

Linda Verrett—Linda, is a junior studying journalism, mass communications and speech. She had a major role in *Home* and went to the American College Theatre Festival in the production. She is currently working on a romance novel.

Suzette Victorian—Suzette is a special education major from Lake Charles. She is a sophomore and enjoys working with children. Her other interests include swimming, skating, and running.

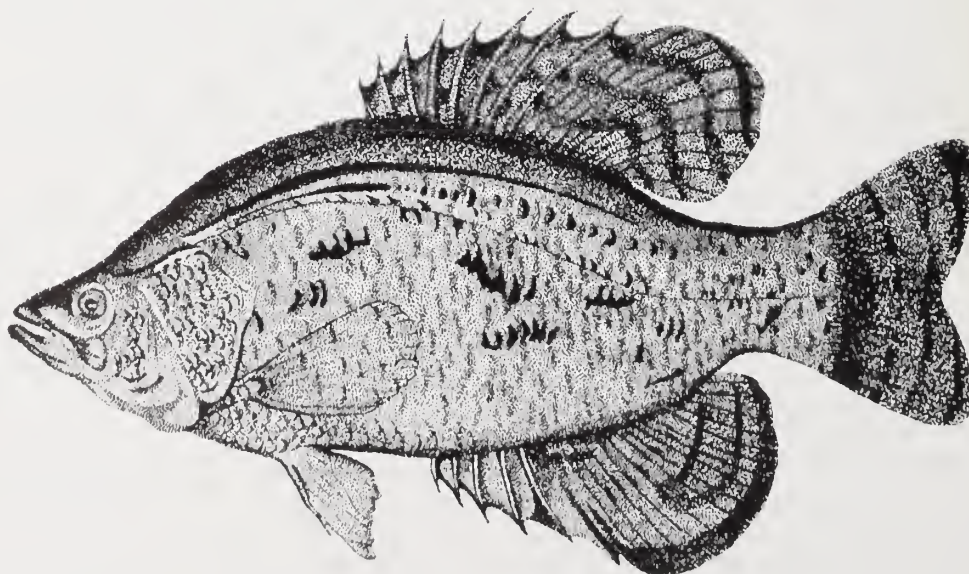
Nancy Villemarette—Nancy is a senior math education major. She received the Math Award at the Phi Kappa Phi honors banquet.

Carol Wells—The archivist in the Cammie Henry Room at Watson Library, Carol writes poetry and plays and enjoys gardening.

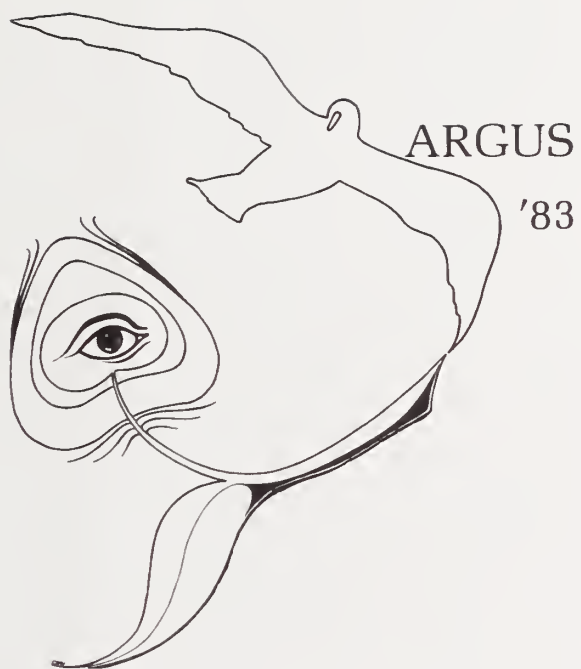
Ron Williams—Ron, affectionately known to most as "Rabbi," is currently offset-cameraman at a local print shop. He has participated in many local productions at the Grand Ecore Amphitheater and Northwestern. His talents also include playing the piano, singing and composing music.

Sallie Watts Willis—Sallie is an alumna from Shreveport who enjoys writing poetry.

Amanda Young—A senior in General Studies, Amanda is a member of the American Legion and Eastern Star. She is a Delta Sigma Theta sorority pledge.



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